

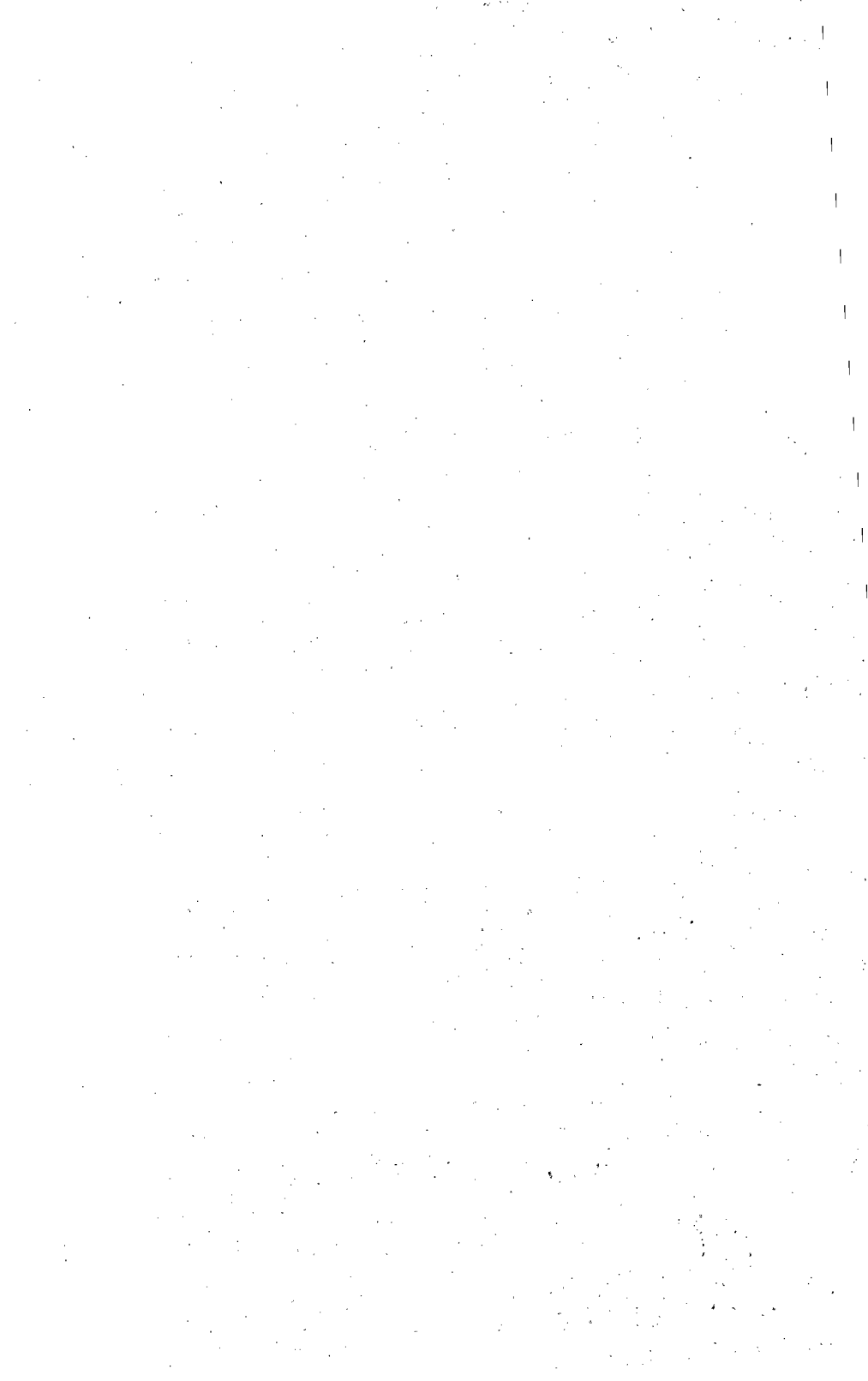
THE SIKH TRADITION : A CONTINUING REALITY

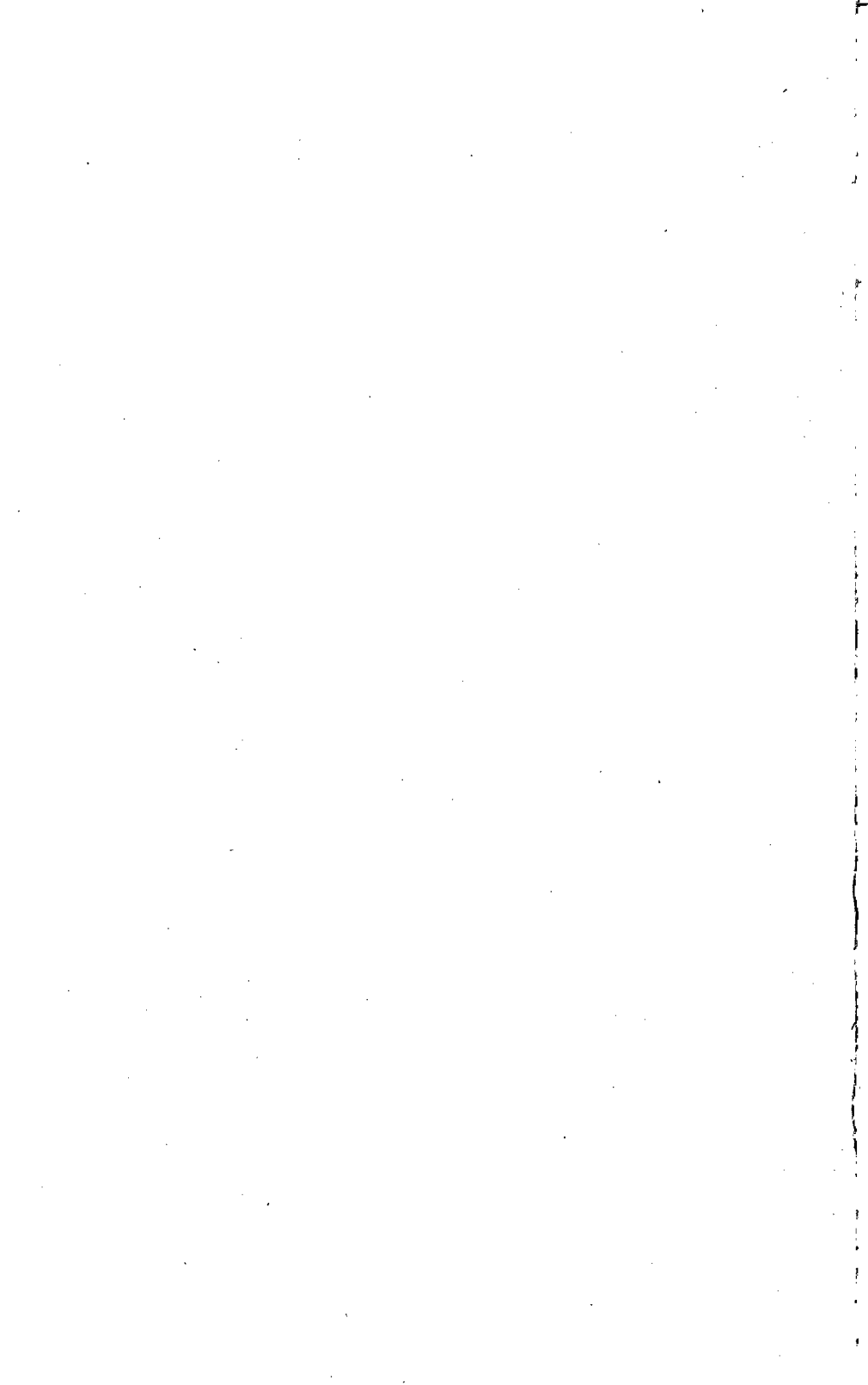
(Essays in History and Religion)

Edited by
SARDAR SINGH BHATIA
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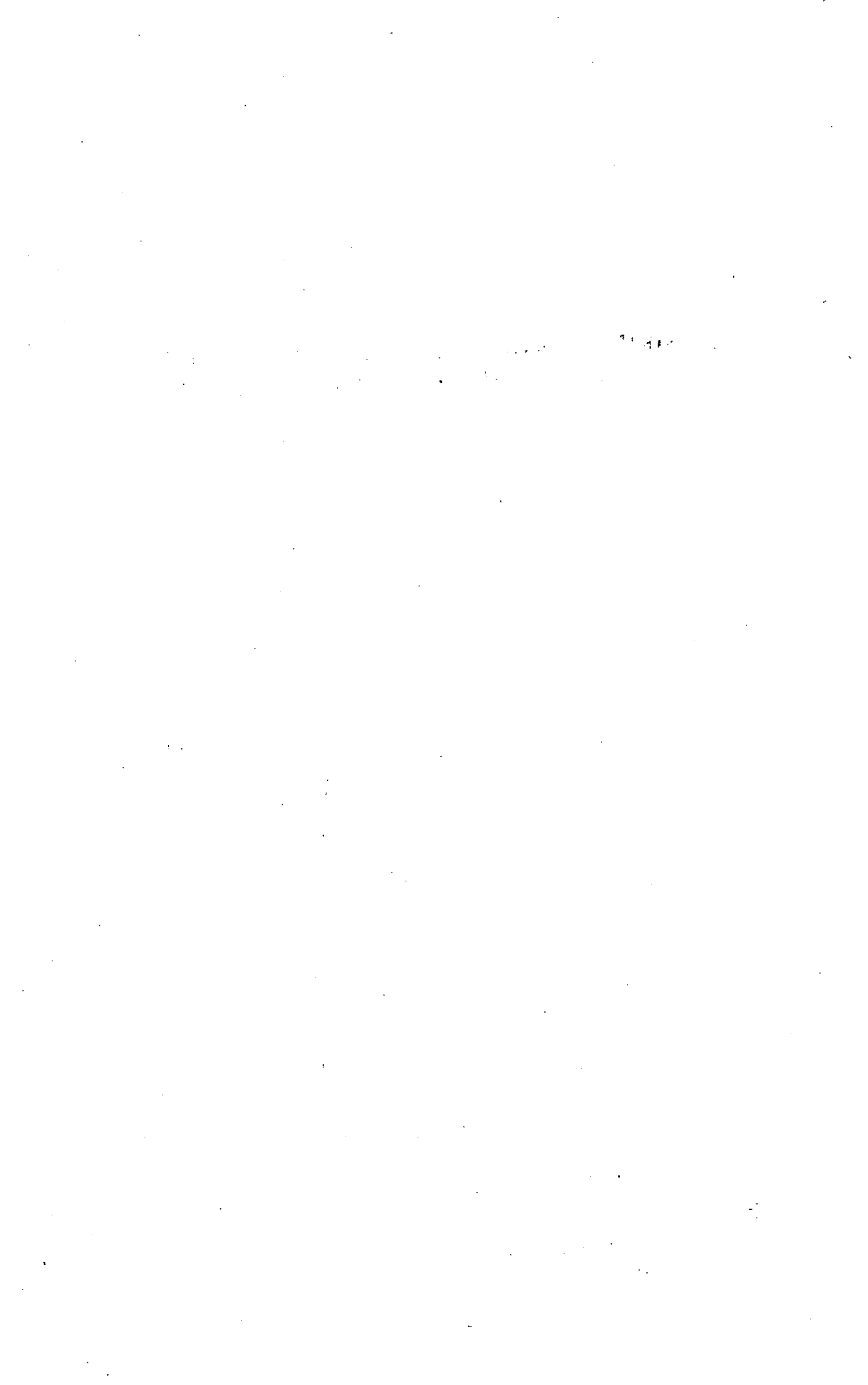


PUBLICATION BUREAU
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA





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Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies
Punjabi University, Patiala

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(ESSAYS IN HISTORY AND RELIGION)

edited by

SARDAR SINGH BHATIA

ANAND SPENCER

Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies
Punjabi University, Patiala

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FOREWORD

The present volume is one of the series of publications that the Punjabi University is bringing out as part of its contribution to the celebrations the Punjabis in general and the Sikhs in particular are holding in connection with the tercentenary of the birth of the Khalsa, that falls on the Baisakhi of 1999. It was on this day in 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh inaugurated the formation of a casteless, classless, egalitarian society of men and women who would be saints in their personal and social lives, but would also be soldiers ever-ready to fight, as and when needed, in the forefront of any struggle against tyranny and injustice.

The idea of the formation of the Khalsa did not descend out of the blue. The Sikh movement had been nurtured and developed deliberately and steadily by the Gurus over the past couple of centuries, so that a wide and well-organised network of dedicated Sikh *sangats* had already come into existence in the length and breadth of the country by the time Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master, came on the scene. What he achieved was the transmutation of the *sangat* into Khalsa, destined to become a sovereign nation. In order, therefore, to fully understand the genesis of the Khalsa, it is necessary to have a glimpse of the background to the historic event of the Baisakhi of 1699.

To provide such a glimpse is the aim of *The Sikh Tradition: A Continuing Reality*. It is an anthology of essays and articles collected from the past issues of *The Journal of Religious Studies*, brought out by the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies. The contributors are scholars of great eminence. These articles are chosen and arranged in such a scheme as to give a sufficient introduction to Sikh Religion as a living and continuing reality. The book may be seen as prefatory and precursory volume to any reading on the Khalsa.

I am deeply appreciative of Sardar Singh Bhatia and Anand Spencer, Readers in the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, who have compiled and edited this collection of articles with great hard work and labour. I hope this publication will receive a wide welcome.

Punjabi University, Patiala
September 21, 1998

JOGINDER SINGH PUAR
Vice-Chancellor

INTRODUCTION

This anthology of essays, in fact, is a collection of twenty-three articles selected from the past issues of *The Journal of Religious Studies* published by the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, during last twenty-eight years. The idea to publish them together in a book form is prompted by the forthcoming celebration of the Khalsa tercentenary in 1999. The publication, at the same time, is also prompted by twin motives. First, the material in Sikhism which was lying scattered and spread over in about thirty issues of the Journal, should not remain dumped in the piles of its volumes and become part of past history. And secondly, this publication should serve as a preparatory volume for the tercentenary readership while most of the other publications on this occasion will be confining to the themes related to the Khalsa and Guru Gobind Singh. As such, this volume aims at providing a background reading-material and information or, broadly speaking, an introduction to the great tradition of Sikhism whose history and faith are worth knowing to understand the Khalsa more deeply.

That is how the idea originated in the Department of Religious Studies. And the proposal for the publication of this book was taken up with the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Joginder Singh Puar, who not only appreciated the idea, but also gave his ready approval with the editorial assignment to the undersigned. But for his help this venture would not have been possible.

The authors whose articles are selected are well known scholars of Sikh history and religion. Sadly, some of them like Dr. Fauja Singh, Prof. Gurbachan Singh Talib, Dr. L.M. Joshi, Dr. Avtar Singh and Prof. Harbans Singh have since passed away.

These articles are a collection of representative writings on

the subject each author has chosen to write, and they provide ample information as such. They reflect a great degree of scholarship and erudition in the treatment of their topics. Since it is a collection of already published articles, it is bound to be different than the one planned out with a subject or a theme on which articles are invited to be freshly written. But this does not mean that the articles, here, are haphazardly collected and put together for publication without any order or scheme. The articles are selected and arranged in a clear framework of the subject-scheme which aims at constituting a full-fledged introduction to the Sikh tradition.

The whole scheme is divided into five major sections beginning with the background history and origin of the Sikh tradition. It covers all essential aspects of what is required to introduce Sikhism, such as its history, the sacred Scripture and beliefs, the religious experiences of medieval Bhaktas, contribution of Guru Gobind Singh, and the recent development of scholastic perspectives and its dialogical context amidst world religions that updates its life and progress as a living reality.

Section one deals with the 'background and beginning' of the Sikh tradition. In that it discusses the "Religio-Cultural Heritage of the Punjab" from pre-historic period as traced by Dr. Fauja Singh. He portrays a splendid account of history of Harappan civilization in the third millenium B.C., the coming and settling down of the Aryans in the second millenium B.C., who gave rise to Vedic and later Brahmanical religion followed by Śramanic traditions (Buddhism and Jainism) in the first millenium B.C. Kushan culture arose in the first century A.D. Dr. Fauja Singh goes through a long description of various forms of Hinduism followed by the Sant tradition and Bhakti movement of medieval age, the advent of Islam in the twelfth century A.D. upto, what he says, "it was in these circumstances that Sikhism, a new religion, made its appearance."

Continuing the discussion further, Dr. K.L. Seshagiri Rao in his article, "Guru Nanak and the Hindu Heritage", points out that "Guru Nanak transcended his Hindu heritage and ... tried to eliminate the prevalent narrowness of outlook both from the followers of Islam and Hinduism." He rejected all those elements in the Hindu

heritage which were inconsistent with his dynamic way of life, and which made a point of departure in his thinking. This article reflects the view that Sikhism is not a continuity or a part or a sect of Hinduism.

Since still some scholars interpret Sikhism as synthesis drawn from Hinduism and Islam, a strong case is made out against this syncretistic approach in his article, "Syncretism and the Formation of the Sikh Tradition", by Paul B. Courtright. To him, "the birth and growth of the Sikh community and faith become intelligible in relation to the historical circumstances of the Punjab in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries... because Guru Nanak and his successors were preaching reform within both Islam and Hinduism and were offering a corrective for what they regarded as perversions in these two faiths.... In other words, Guru Nanak and the beginnings of Sikhism were a part of this reformist response to the perversion and chaos of the time." This reformist response was also expressed in the contemporary Bhakti and Sufi movements which arose as religious reform and renaissance against the existing orthodox traditions. Sikhism was much nearer to these movements than to Islam and Hinduism. And since "Sikhism maintains an identity separate from Hinduism and Islam... it would be more accurate to categorize the tradition as a revelation to which circumstances gave separate and unique identity apart from Hinduism and Islam."

Adding to the views of Courtright on Sikhism as a separate identity, Dr. Avtar Singh discusses "The Elements of Sikh Culture". Besides explaining the basic universal virtues such as wisdom, truthfulness, temperance, justice, courage, humanity and contentment as traits of Sikh value system, he adds "that the Sikh culture lays a high premium on courage and fearlessness" as the distinguishing elements of Sikh religion. A society broken badly with all kinds of ills and evils needs a culture or a religion with these distinct traits of courage and fearlessness to be born as a redemptive force. Sikhism was seen as a force born in this situation.

How Sikhism was born, grew and continued as a reality, is discussed in the culminating article of this section by Prof. Harbans

Singh, "Guru Nanak as Historical Memory and Continuing Reality in Sikh Tradition." (It is from this article that the title of this volume has been taken.)

Recalling the centenary celebrations of 1899, 1967 and 1969, Prof. Harbans Singh recalls the continuing response of the Sikhs to the memory of their Gurus. To begin with, he recovers the historical memory of Guru Nanak from the earliest sources known as *Janam Sākhīs*, *Tuzuk-i-Bābarī*, *Vārāṇ* of Bhai Gurdas, etc. The biographical account is extended to all the succeeding Gurus and presented in a very lucid and systematic manner with a special emphasis on the continuing presence of one Spirit in and through ten personal Gurus, culminating in the embodiment of the Guruship in Guru Granth. "For Sikhs the Guru Granth has since been the manifestation of the Guru's spirit. Through it Guru Nanak lives on in the Sikh faith and tradition as a reality transcending the time-and-space reality. This awareness of the indwelling presence of the Guru has been of crucial importance to the Sikh community as a whole as well as to its members individually."

Scripture came as a spiritual need to authenticate the community. The authority of the Scripture is its Divine Revelation (*dhur kī bāṇī*). It is in the second section of this volume that the Sikh Scripture and Beliefs are discussed under five articles. Prof. Pritam Singh introduces the "Adi Granth : the Sikh Scripture," which is also known as "Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Granth Sahib, Granth Sahib and Adi Granth, although the original title of the book, compiled in 1604 by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, was simply 'pothi'." He presents an exhaustive and scholarly discussion on every aspect of the Guru Granth such as the collection and scrutinizing of the material, the notion and wisdom behind the scheme and arrangement of contents in Ragas and other order, the language and dialect, the contributors (Gurus and Bhaktas of different background), the installation of Guru Granth and its place in the community and history, and in culture and literature. In his concluding remarks he says, "The Adi Granth is, therefore, much more than a Sikh Scripture. Besides being a valuable spiritual heritage and an epitome of wisdom, it is a compendium of great historical socio-cultural, literary and linguistic significance."

The Sikh beliefs and doctrines are explained by Prof. Gurbachan Singh Talib in his article, "Sikhism – Some of its Fundamental Doctrines." Beginning his discussion on Sikhism as a distinct religion he has emphasized that though the terms and thought-forms of the existing language and religion such as "Rāma, Parameshwar, Ishwar, Gopāl, Govind... Parvardigār, Rahīm, Qādir, Karīm, Allāh and Khudā too are found used, the use of such names implies not a belief in the doctrinal teaching of Islam and Hinduism. With all the usage of these attributive names of one Supreme Reality, the Supreme being, Sikhism is seen as monotheistic in its fundamental belief. Sahaj, Sevā, Nām, and Karma are other distinctive concepts elaborated at good length. "Related to the doctrine of action, keeping the self in the transmigratory cycle, is the doctrine of Grace which in Sikhism is a cardinal principle." A theological discussion is devoted to it through explaining the terms and notions such as Prasād, Bhakti, Mehr, and Razā, as inclusive aspects of the meaning of release from cycle of action and its consequences. The comparative methodology of Talib's discussion of other religions – Hinduism and Islam – brings about clarity in understanding the distinctive and exclusive character and meaning of Sikh doctrines.

"The World and Māyā in Sikh Cosmology" is the topic of Dr. Wazir Singh. It is a very systematic presentation of Sikh philosophy and theology on the subject. Beginning the discussion from the pre-cosmic state, the creation is explained as the continual cyclic process – creation-dissolution-recreation. The world is considered to be real in Sikh philosophy. Its inherent *māyā* aspect is distinct from the traditional notion of illusion. "The Sikh view of creation equates the created universe with the manifest aspect of the Unmanifest. The formless, spiritual Absolute in its pre-cosmic thought-free phase is the hidden (*gupt*) reality, which in the cosmic thoughtful phase assumes the character of revealed (*pargat*) reality." The terms and notions such as *hukam*, *razā*, *māyā*, *qudrat*, *sanjog*, and *vijog*, etc., are used to explain the Sikh cosmology.

In continuing the discussion into Sikh doctrines or beliefs, Dr. L.M. Joshi delves deep into the "Conception of Jīvanmukti in Guru Tegh Bahādur's Hymns." After a detailed exposition of the

common linguistic term 'mukti' and the consequent soteriological theories of theistic and non-theistic traditions in India, Dr. Joshi says, "The idea of God is at the centre of Guru Tegh Bahadur's soteriology ... He who knows God as the one and only one reality is a knower indeed, a *giānī*. Such a person practises constant mindfulness with regard to Lord God. This constant mindfulness of God's presence is called *nām-simaran*. It is the way to liberation." And the liberated being is called *mukta* and *giānī*, whose characteristics are, then, explained and elucidated in detail by citing from Guru Tegh Bahadur's *bāṇī* through comparative study of other traditions for a more and cogent and clear grasp of the Sikh idea of *mukti* and *jīvanmukti*.

The third section consisting of five articles deals with the Holy Bhaktas, their spiritual experience and their consciousness as part of the Sikh tradition. Cutting across all the cultural and caste barriers the ecumenical spirit of the Sikh tradition finds expression in the inclusion of *bāṇī* from the Bhaktas of Hindu, Muslim and other caste background. The Adi Granth is a compilation of Guru-*bāṇī* and Bhakta-*bāṇī* and they are arranged in the same order as the hymns of Gurus are followed by that of Bhaktas. It contains *bāṇī* of six Gurus and twenty-nine Bhaktas and Bards. These articles include discussion on five Bhaktas.

In his article, "Guru-*bāṇī* and Bhakta-*bāṇī* : A Philosophical Analysis," Dr. Nirbhai Singh has attempted to discover the philosophical basis of the identical relationship between the Guru-*bāṇī* and Bhakta-*bāṇī* in the Guru Granth Sahib. There is an apparent variance with regard to time and space, socio-religious, linguistic and cultural conditions and backgrounds that each contributor of *bāṇī* (hymns) carries, yet they form mystic identity, as he says "The hymns of Scripture, perhaps, present phenomenological characteristics of identical mystical experiences of their contributors. Their ontic common core of immediate mystical experiences is expressed through diversity of linguistic expressions couched in regional dialects, myths, metaphors, symbols and other folk genres. All the hymns incorporated in the canon represent cross cultural, phenomenological account of mystical experiences...All these hymns (*śabads*) are coherent with the philosophical struc-

ture of the Sikh canon... The text of Guru Granth is, thus, an ideal or exemplary Scripture which reiterates doctrinal identity between Guru-*bāṇī* and Bhakta-*bāṇī*." It is the common experience of the non-dual nature of the Supreme Being which is professed in the creedal affirmation (*mulmantra*) as the underlying yardstick of the *bāṇī* so contributed and incorporated, which also provides a uniform and identical metaphysical structure to the Canon.

Closely following the above analysis comes another article, "Songs and Singers : Ravidas and the Guru Granth," by Winard M. Callewaert. It is an interesting comparative study of Ravidas' hymns found in the Guru Granth Sahib and in other manuscripts such as Sarvāṅgi and Pañc-vāṇi.

Among the saints, Bhakta Namdev is the major contributor to the Adi Granth. A scholarly and analytical study of his hymns and spiritual experience is presented by Prof. Gurbachan Singh Talib in his essay on "Bhakta Namdev – A Brief Study of His Spiritual Experience." This experience is explained as an experience of the non-dual nature of God who is immanently present. "The conception of the Supreme Being as it emerges from the hymns of Namdev is that of the formless Brahm, who pervades the entire universe as Soul or Self and who may not be confined within the limits of a man-made place of worship." Namdev's hymns also express spiritualized love for God, and his witnessing soul in the voice of human suffering, and this is what has appealed to Guru Arjan Dev to include his hymns in the Adi Granth.

It is that appeal of high spiritual attainment which has transcended the caste consideration in the inclusion of Baba Farid, a Muslim, in the Sikh spiritual tradition. W.H. McLeod writes "The Significance of Baba Farid as a Symbol of Human Brotherhood," where he accepts him as the symbol of understanding and tolerance between men of different beliefs and different traditions. McLeod's is an interesting essay on how Baba Farid of history becomes Baba Farid of faith, who will be remembered "not because he worked wonders or because he enjoyed a considerable following during his own day. They have remembered him because the message which he has come to symbolize is one which speaks of the needs of every generation. It is for this reason that it

survives today.”

Another important contributor of Bhakt-*bāṇī* is sant Kabir. Like Baba Farid, his life and teaching transcended all caste and cultural barriers so much so he too was owned and claimed by Hindus and Muslims as their saint. In his article, “Radical Consciousness of St. Kabir,” Sehdev Kumar presents St. Kabir as a restless preacher of human unity, “an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity, and as a champion of the oppressed and the poor, specially the untouchables.” In Kabir thus one discovers the most remarkable synthesis of a social and cultural rebel and a spiritual seeker. For him Ram and Allah are one. Like Baba Farid and Bhakta Ravidas, he too was claimed and owned by Hindus and Muslims alike.

It is because of their ideological affinity with the Guru-*bāṇī* that these Bhakta’s *bāṇī* is included in the Sikh Scripture. Their contribution and their place in the Sikh tradition are held in great esteem and reverence.

The fourth section of this anthology is devoted to the contribution of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last in the physical personage of Guruship in the Sikh tradition. He is the author of the Dasam Granth, the sacred literature of the Sikhs, that comes after the Adi Granth (The Scripture). The section begins with Dr. Avtar Singh’s essay on “Guru Gobind Singh’s Theory of Karma.” Citing the famous utterance of Guru Gobind Singh that ‘*subh karman te kabhun na taron*’ (...not turn away from good action), he considers the theory of *karma* to be “central to the philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh.” The utterance is important as it was affirmed and asserted at the time of great decadence of values when injustice, oppression and corruption were rampant in the Indian society. In upholding the *karma*, society is upheld, is explained as a perennial maxim of Guru Gobind Singh’s teaching. The comparative analysis of Karma theory in the Indian traditions sharpens the Sikh understanding of *karma* and good action to uphold and protect justice even to the risk of life, a sacrifice – martyrdom.

Another concept of great theological and philosophical bearing found in Sikhism is the idea of timelessness or non-temporality. Much of its content is based on the works of Guru Gobind

Singh. This has been expounded by Dr. Wazir Singh in his article, "Sikh Philosophy as Akāl vāda (Non-temporalism)." He says, "Guru Gobind Singh's Bāni is a repository of concepts and terms, especially of the epithets relating to 'time'. Besides Kāl and Akāl he uses Mahā Kāl (macro-time) and Sarb-Kāl (all time) to indicate a Being above and beyond the eventful time of the universe. For him, Kāl itself is a dimension of Akāl." The meaning of Akāl is identified with Timeless, Formless, Nameless, Fathomless, Inexpressible, Immortal and positively speaking, Eternal, Being, Beyond, Essence etc. The timelessness encompasses all the temporal being emanating from his Essence. The temporal is a physical manifestation of the non-temporal, immanent aspect of the transcendent. Kāl (time) is thus inclusive and part of Akāl (Timelessness), because for any movement spatial dimension is a necessary postulate without which it cannot be measured and manifested or imagined. Besides its metaphysical dimension, "the concept of Akāl, central to Jāp Sāhib, has percolated to the social, political and cultural life of the Sikh community. Inspired by its theme, they call the Gurus Bāni, Akālī Bāni. The political wing of the community is known as Akālī Dal," and Akāl Takht as the highest seat of temporal and spiritual authority of the Sikh tradition.

A very interesting and unique contribution of Guru Gobind Singh comes from his symbolic and functional approach to the Purānic myth of Goddess Durgā. An impressive and interpretative study of this myth is done by Dr. Nikky-Gunninder Kaur Singh in her article, "Durgā Recalled by the Tenth Guru". She presents an indepth analysis of the account of Durgā. The essay is mainly based on the compositions of *Chandi Charitra* and *Chandi di Vār* included in the Dasam Granth. Durgā is shown as a symbol of power, valour and chivalry; and the functional purpose of the narration is to create thrill and excitement for courage and confidence as she explains, "the poet's overall objective is the reproduction of thrilling story – '*kautak hetu kari kavi ne*' ...Guru Gobind Singh's choice of Durgā means unequivocal acknowledgement of woman's power. Countless goddesses figure in the Purānas. Almost all of them are married with gods as their spouses. As wives, the goddesses lack individual status and identity. Many of them, like the wives of

Brahmā and Viṣṇu, appear to be thin, dependent creatures, having no distinctive personalities or traits of their own... The one exception is Durgā. Most rare in the Purāṇas, she is the one goddess without husband, consort or lover. She is independent; she is powerful... She can generate on her own: Kālī is produced by Durgā from her fury. The goddess needs no male."

For Guru Gobind Singh, Durgā is also a symbol and ideal of aesthetic value, compassion and mercy. In his description of Durgā, "We encounter a radiant and majestic figure whose charms none can resist. Such is her loveliness that even the moonbeams – after touching her person – become more lustrous... She symbolizes the moral power to challenge the oppressive system. Here aggression is indeed healthy, her anger is indeed purifying. This affirmation of female power by Guru Gobind Singh illustrates the overall positive view of the woman in Sikh speculation." Thus one can see in Guru Gobind Singh a pioneer of feminist theology, a feminist writer whose inspiration is greatly reflected in Sikh history and faith of the succeeding generation.

The concluding article on the contribution of Guru Gobind Singh is by Dr. Jodh Singh on the topic, "Thematic Study of *Bachitra Nātak*". He highlights the theme of Sword as a symbol of Divine power that operates in action against injustice and oppression, in saving the sufferer and upholding the Dharma. It is regarded as "the saviour of saints and destroyer of the evil, a symbol of the supreme truth of the brotherhood of mankind and fatherhood of one Supreme Being." Dharma is another theme of the *Bachitra Nātak* which has been greatly elaborated with main emphasis on its practical aspect in life whose highest manifestation lies in the sacrifice and undergoing a martyrdom.

"The major aspect of this work is the reiteration by Guru Gobind Singh of the fact that 'one divine light' worked in all the earlier Gurus who passed it on to their respective successors." This theology of Decemvirate (ten bodies one spirit) is a unique contribution of Guru Gobind Singh.

The fifth and the last section of this volume contains articles on scholarly studies of Sikhism, and its dialogical perspective. The purpose of this section is to introduce the scholarly and academic

studies that have taken place in Sikhism as well as to inform that Sikhism is not a closed religion existing in religious solipsism. Sikhism is a world religion, it lives and interacts amidst other religions of the world and thus it has an attitude, perspective and approach towards other faiths. It takes into account the theological significance of people of other faiths. It has potential and possibilities for interfaith dialogue.

An essay on "Scholarly Study of Sikhism", by Prof. Harbans Singh, is a first systematic and annotated survey of important works from English and Indian authors. In Sikh history the renaissance movement known as Singh Sabha movement gave much impetus to the scholarly and academic interest in Sikh studies, though such studies were started much earlier as Prof. Harbans Singh points out that "the first published work on Sikhs, in any language, appeared in 1788. That was 80 years after the passing away of Guru Gobind Singh." The further account of survey covers a big list of works up to recent times.

Equally important is another analytical survey devoted to the Western studies of Sikhism done by Stephen Dunning in his article, "The Sikh Religion: An Examination of Some of the Western Studies." It is an objective analysis and examination of the western studies by a Westerner himself. After making a preliminary survey of English writings on Sikhism, Dunning focuses "upon four scholars who have not only done the most study and writing about Sikhism but who are spread at almost equal intervals over the past one hundred years: Trumpp, Macauliffe, Archer, and McLeod." He finds Trumpp to be confused, baffled, and negative in his studies and approach, and pre-occupied with Hindu framework of thoughts. Thus for Trumpp, Sikhism is a Hindu sect. The difficulty with Trumpp was that there was not much scholarly work available at that time and his own inaccessibility to the Sikh original writings.

"From 1877 to 1909 a great many changes occurred in the Punjab," when Macauliffe undertook Sikh studies. Macauliffe knew Trumpp's situation and the question he has raised, and the misunderstandings and lapses he carried. Macauliffe's study is, therefore, sympathetic and finds a great approval in Sikh response. It is

during Archer's time that "more discriminating studies came from Jodh Singh and Teja Singh in Theology and Ganda Singh in History. Yet "two great failings of Archer's study are his conviction that Sikhism has no real theology and his constant derogation of Sikh ethics." With regard to McLeod, Dunning repeats Sher Singh's analysis that "McLeod fares far better than any of his Western predecessors." "His objective, historical and linguistic analysis has taken Western Sikh studies far beyond all previous efforts."

The last three articles of the last section of this volume discuss Sikhism in relation to other faiths: Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. This sets the focus on wider context or world's great traditions. Sikhism being latest, born and grown amidst the ubiquity of religious pluralism is bound to respond in a manner reflective of the characteristic core and feature of its religious life. These essays bring out these aspects of Sikhism to the fore.

"Guru Nanak's Teaching in Relation to Sufism" is an essay by Prof. Gurbachan Singh Talib. At the outset he refutes any Muslim or Sufi doctrinal or theological influence on Guru Nanak, though in his *bāṇī* he used terms and words from Arabic and Persian languages. He presents Guru Nanak as a teacher and a preacher of truth and spiritual awakening and regeneration as he explains that "Guru Nanak visited the centres of the various orders of Muslim spiritual teachers, and even the holiest of holy of Islam, Mecca, with the urge in his soul to plead with Muslim teachers – theologians and Sufis, Pirs and Sheikhs – to liberalize and humanize the idea of the religious life, particularly among their coreligionists.... It was to draw the Muslim teachers into this vast movement of the spiritual regeneration of mankind that Guru Nanak took such pains to visit the Muslim teachers in their centres."

During his lifetime Guru Nanak came across and had dialogue with people of different faiths. Among them were also Yogis and Siddhas. Guru Nanak expressed his views and reaction on their Yogic and Tantrik practices. This has been discussed in his article, "Tantra Yoga and the Guru Granth," by Prof. S.S. Kohli. According to him "All *mantras*, except the Name of the Lord have been rejected by Adi Granth... The Adi Granth is averse to such practices. Guru Nanak Dev says, 'The charmer (tantrik), practis-

ing charms, ties the many-coloured thread round the neck. The charmer is of shallow mind and intellect..." It is only in regarding the Guru as central in the spiritual life of the seeker that resemblance between Sikhism and Tantricism can be seen.

The Sikh Scripture is ecumenical in its letter and spirit, and it has much to offer and contribute towards interfaith relationship and understanding. These dimensions have been explored and investigated in his article, "The Word: A Study in Christian-Sikh Dialogue," by Dr. Anand Spencer. The concept of Sabad or Word has been found as a point of contact, a meeting-point for dialogue. The Sabad as creative wisdom and power of God is understandable in both the religions. The Divine Word is regarded as eternal and everlasting. As God's Will or Law or Principle it operates and exists in the whole creation, and upholds and sustains it. Sabad has meaning, hence it is wisdom, mind and intelligence. Thus Sabad is guide and teacher (Guru). As mind, wisdom and will of God, it reveals God. Sabad being communication of God (*dhur kī bānī*), is Scripture. Through these and other points in the meaning of Word, a discussion is presented on Christian-Sikh dialogue. But it can serve as a model for dialogue of Sikhism with other religions.

Interfaith dialogue is a recent trend and development in the religious history of the world. It is a step forward in the study and understanding of religions. It is a practical aspect, a further advance, over against the speculative or academic aspect of religion. In interfaith dialogue an effort is concentrated on developing a better understanding and loving relationship among religions on the basis of potentialities and possibilities in one's own religion.

Sikhism is rich with all these aspects and is avidly anxious to enter into a fruitful dialogue of religions as reflected in this concluding article. And these are the signs and characteristics of a living and dynamic religion. Sikhism is undoubtedly such a one.

S.S. BHATIA
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BACKGROUND AND BEGINNING



RELIGIO-CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE PUNJAB*

FAUJA SINGH

The subject of this paper is a vast one, and howsoever one may try it is an uphill task to present it properly within the scope of a paper. I have, chosen to concentrate primarily on the religious heritage of the Punjab prior to the rise of Sikhism in the sixteenth century. A word of explanation about the geographical limits of the Punjab used in the present context seems necessary at the outset. The Punjab has been known by different names at different points of time in its long and chequered history. Nor have its geographical boundaries been the same at all times. As it is now understood, it is not the land of five rivers, which is the literal connotation of the term. Broadly speaking, the term has been used at times for the entire region from Delhi to the Khyber Pass, but more often for one or another part thereof, irrespective of its locale or size. Presently we are faced with a peculiar situation in which the erstwhile Punjab has been divided into two parts and both of them are known by the same name, 'Punjab'. So far as the context of this paper goes, it is appropriate to understand the term in its broad historical sense and not in the restricted political sense of today. Moreover, it is not possible to deal with Punjab in isolation from the rest of India.

The Punjab is said to be one of the first parts of the sub-continent of India to have human habitation. The excavations conducted in the Soan Valley, lying in the Upper Sind Sagar Doab, have shown that towards the end of the first Inter-Glacial, or about

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the beginning of the Second Ice Age, the old stone-age, man lived in this area. Further light on this aspect has been thrown by the excavations carried out in an old bed of the Beas Valley. Among the important archaeological finds of these places are massive pebble-cutting tools referred to as choppers. The discovery of similar tools at other places further east and south shows that the influence of the Soan culture was extended over a large part of north India. In the course of time, the old stone culture was succeeded by the new stone age or Upper Paleolithic culture when *homo sapiens* as we understand them today appeared. The new period was marked by the emergence of clan communities, taming of animals, appearance of pottery and gradual transition to agriculture. These changes crystallised further during the succeeding Mesolithic and Neo-lithic period. The most advanced Neolithic cultures were those found in Baluchistan, Sind and southern Punjab, which in a way anticipated the later urban civilization of the Indus Valley. Our knowledge of these earlier periods of the evolution of human society in the Punjab is however so limited that we cannot say anything definitely about the religious beliefs and practices of the people then.

About the middle of the third millennium B.C., or a few centuries later, appeared the flowering of the marvellous urban civilization of Harappa (now in Punjab-Pakistan). Its appearance, however, was not so sudden as it was thought at one time. Nor was its disappearance so abrupt as was once supposed by certain scholars. The presence of prolonged phases of both pre-Harappan and post-Harappan civilization indicate that this civilization had a long span of life with its gradual genesis and decline. In fact, it continued to exist even after the urban centres in Sind, Baluchistan and Afghanistan had ceased to exist. Nor would it be correct to limit its influence to a narrow strip of territory in south Punjab as was the contention of archaeologists and historians some decades ago. Fresh researches have revealed that the Harappan civilization embraced an enormous territory which stretched for more than 100 kms from north to south and more than 1600 kms from west to east. The existence of large cities and the carefully defined system of town planning and architecture point to the high level of development attained by this civilization.

Archaeological findings give us some idea of the religious views entertained by the people of the Harappan civilization. There is, for example, sufficient evidence to believe that the first temples in the Punjab were built during this period. Links have also been found between these temples and ritual bathing pools. Also certain stone figures have been discovered which seem to represent the figures of men dedicated to a male deity comparable to proto-Siva. Sir John Marshall who bore the main responsibility of excavations has identified the deity with *Śiva-Paśupati*, i.e. Śiva the Patron and Protector of cattle, on the ground of wild animals standing near him on both of his sides. A. Ghosh has questioned this assumption but his view has not been accepted by most scholars of the subject. The seals which are a special feature of this civilization show that the Harappans also practised the rites of fire and water as well as tree-worship. Many of those seals reveal concepts having direct parallels with the religious ideas of Hinduism of the later period. A large number of terra-cotta figurines discovered in the excavations point to the cult of a Mother Goddess. However, all these inferences are still to a large extent mere hypotheses and will remain so until we are in a position to decipher the Indus script. Yet, even now it would be hardly possible to deny that the traditions of the Harappan civilization exerted a definite influence on the development of Vedic tribes.

II

The Harappan civilization declined during the first half of the second millennium B.C. and then a new people, the Aryans, entered the Punjab and established their domination. There is a tendency on the part of some scholars to view their entry into the country (around 1500 B.C.) as the subjugation of backward aborigines by a people who brought civilization to India and set up an advanced society there. But it is an outdated view and no sound scholar, whether Indian or foreigner, is prepared to admit that the advent of Aryans was preceded by a dark period of barbarism. Rather, in many respects the new-comers were worse off than their highly urbanized Harappan predecessors. But in one respect the Aryans had a clear edge over them and that was their familiarity with the use of iron to which the earlier people were total strangers.

The Aryans entered the Punjab in several waves, the first of which is supposed to have made its appearance sometimes during the first half of the second millennium B.C. Their first great book, the *R̥g-veda*, according to most modern experts, dating from the 11th or 10th century B.C., was produced in the Punjab, particularly those parts of it which are not far off from the land between Ambala and Thanesar. This shows that the Aryans stayed in the Punjab for several hundred years before they moved into the Jamuna-Ganga Doab and further ahead. This was the period when there grew up in the Punjab the famous Painted Grey ware culture. This culture is regarded as the product of interaction of the new Aryan culture with the old local cultures which were perhaps relics of the later Harappan culture. It would appear from linguistic and archaeological evidence that in the Punjab the Aryans had to deal mainly with Dravidian tribes. The languages and the customs prevalent among these local tribes influenced the life of the Vedic tribes. Linguistic analysis of the *R̥g-veda* and other Samhitas has revealed that the Dravidian languages exerted a marked influence on the Aryans, although their interaction was of short duration. Gradually a new culture emerged, which embraced the achievements of both the Aryans and local tribes and was soon common to a large part of the population of northern India. This culture cannot, strictly speaking, be regarded as an Indo-Aryan one introduced from outside and only with some mental reservation may be termed the culture of the Vedic tribes of the *R̥g-veda* age, because it was already a specifically Indian culture of the first millennium B.C.

Archaeological evidence shows that the Painted Grey Ware culture gave way to the Northern Black-Polished Ware culture around the second half of the first millennium B.C. (between the 6th and 2nd centuries B.C.). This latter culture was in many ways indebted to the traditions of the preceding period; yet it was now no longer a culture merely of Vedic Indo-Aryans but a culture of the Indian tribes of northern India. The range of this culture spread from the Punjab to the lower reaches of the Ganga because by this time the Aryans had practically penetrated the main regions of the Ganges Valley.

Vedic texts enable us to acquaint ourselves with the religious

views of the ancient Indians of the Vedic age. Vedism is the most ancient system of religious beliefs in India and it was to exert a major influence on later religious trends and philosophical teaching in the country. But it has to be admitted that the different elements of this system took shape and crystallised over a very long period. An essential element of the Vedic religion was polytheism—worship of a large number of gods and goddesses. It was to these divinities that they addressed their hymns and offered all their sacrifices. People's attitude then was primarily concerned with the here and not the hereafter, this life and not the life beyond. In their hymns they asked the gods to send them more cattle, to give them victory in battle, good harvests, or to free them from disaster or ruin. Broadly, their divinities belonged to three categories : (i) heavenly gods, (ii) terrestrial gods, (iii) gods of *antarikṣa* (space between heaven and earth). The first category included the Sun-god (*surya*), Usha (goddess of the dawn) and Varuna, the upholder of moral order or *ṛta*. In the second category those held in the highest esteem were Agni (god of fire) and Soma (god of the holy intoxicating juice). The principal gods of the third category were Rudra (god of storms), Vāyu (god of wind) and Indra (god of thunder and rain). Among all these gods Indra was perhaps the most important, as 250 hymns of the *Rg-veda* (almost a quarter of the total number) are devoted to him. Varuna's significance was also very great. He was believed to be ruling over the entire universe round which he travelled on a chariot. He determined the movements of the heavenly bodies and the actions of men. He was unsparing in his dealings with the sinful but was merciful to the innocent and the repentant. He even laid the moral standards for the gods. Such ethical aspects associated with the god Varuna were elaborated later and incorporated in subsequent religious and philosophical systems of ancient India. Unlike Indra and Varuna, Rudra was assigned only a secondary importance in *Rg-veda*. Some scholars explain this by saying that he was taken over by the Aryans from the local tribes. But with the passage of time his position vastly improved and he became one of the most popular of all gods. Like Rudra, the Viṣṇu of the *Rg-veda* was also a minor god who subsequently became one of the principal gods. Among the

terrestrial gods both Agni and Soma were regarded very highly. Agni was of fundamental importance with regard to religious rites, which had to be performed if proper links between men and gods were to be established. Soma has 120 hymns dedicated to him in the *Ṛg-veda*. Both gods and men sought to partake of this drink because they thought that through its medium they could achieve immortality.

It may be noted that during the earlier phase of Vedism there was no clear-cut individualization of the gods, or clear-cut distribution of their functions. There was also no firmly stipulated hierarchy for the gods. The general tendency, rather, was what Max Müller has described as henotheism. This being the practice of ascribing all attributes to any particular god at a particular moment, reflected a certain trend towards a highly specific variety of monotheism that later found its most detailed expression in the doctrine of the upaniṣads.

Apart from benevolent gods, the people of the Vedic age believed in the existence of evil spirits and demons—*rākṣasas* and *asuras*.

As Vedism developed, changes came about in the significance of the various gods and their place in the general pattern of Vedic mythology and rites. The ancient gods gradually lost their importance and some new gods like Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva emerged as the three principal deities constituting what came to be called *trimūrtī* (trinity). Still another major change was the emergence of a system of ritualism. This led to the rise of a professional class of priests called Brahmanas. The priest-hood being interested in the maintenance of their supremacy in the society, consolidated their position further by propagating the belief that it was only through the performance of prescribed rituals with the help of Brahmanas that people could achieve meaningful identity with the gods.

The *Ṛg-veda* was the first of the Indo-Aryans' four Vedas. The other three Vedas were (a) the *Sāma-veda* (a collection of chants), (b) the *Yajur-veda* (a collection of prayers and formulas of sacrifices) and (c) the *Atharva-veda* (a collection of incantations and formulas of magic). All these later Vedas were compiled after

the Aryans had already penetrated the Jamuna-Ganga Doab and the territories beyond. After the Vedas, but in the context of the same tradition, came many other works such as the Brāhmaṇas (interpretations of the Vedic rituals), Āraṇyakas (priest books). Upaniṣads (religious-cum-philosophical treatises), and the epics of Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata.

The Upaniṣads marked the culmination of the Vedic religious tradition. It is commonly agreed that they were 108 in number, of which 13 are regarded as the most ancient texts. Their period of composition is believed to be from the seventh to the fourth century B.C. Proceeding from a basically traditional approach, the authors of these texts were able to resolve problems extending far beyond the scope of Vedic themes. In essence they represent the first attempt to explain the world within the frame-work of a single world-view. The idealist view of the Upaniṣads revolved round the theme viz. *Ātmā is Brahman* and *Brahman is Ātmā*, i.e., it is all *Brahman*, and the individual soul is only an illusion. The world is essentially in a state of uninterrupted change; not only the material world but also the spiritual world is subject to this process of constant change is explained in terms of a universal law of *karma* and the law of *karma* operates in such a way that the entire phenomenon of birth and death in the universe inclusive of all forms of creation is determined by it. The law of *karma* governs the transformation of life from one form into another in a cyclic manner. Thus the Upaniṣads reveal marked differences with the Vedic teaching. Many traditional tenets were interpreted in them in a new light and new explanations were offered. The Vedic man revered his traditional gods for his good fortune. The Upaniṣads presented a very different teaching. There were no personal gods for men, just as there was no personal man, limited in terms of space and time. Rather, man was considered part of the unending cycle of existence. It was said that the flow of life is eternal and all living things in the universe are subject to it. Not all Upaniṣads, however, were idealist. One of the thinkers named Uddalaka, at least, gave expression to realistic views, coming very close to a variety of materialism. He endowed Nature with the main creative force and thought that all that exists in the world (both physical and mental

including consciousness) is the product of material elements.

The *karma* doctrine of Upaniṣads contributed one of the basic principles of Indian religion. It also possessed specific social implications insofar as it provided an answer to the crucial question as to the reason behind human suffering and adversity. Some of the principles laid down in the Upaniṣads were later used in the Buddhist and Jaina teachings. Many of their ideas had a major influence on the philosophers and writers of the Middle Ages and cultural developments in modern and contemporary history, not only within India but also far beyond her borders.

The epics of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* which came just a few centuries after the Upaniṣads have their own importance for their valuable information on the various aspects of social and cultural life, the political organization and everyday life of our ancient people. Even today they are great forces affecting the cultural and social life of our country.

III

About the middle of the first millennium B.C., some movements of protest arose against the Brahmanical Vedism. One of these movements was the appearance of Upaniṣads which we have already seen. However, this movement did not reject Vedism but strove to inject it with a new life on a new theoretically sounder basis. The real challenge of Vedism came from unorthodox movements of Jainism and Buddhism, and also those schools of thought which gave expression to the materialist trend in Indian philosophy. The main cause of this revolt against Vedism was the general dissatisfaction with the primitive character of its mythological concepts, its intricate and archaic ritual, the material claims of its priests whom many had ceased to regard as the bearers of superior wisdom. About this time there was an intensive spiritual searching. The way in this direction was led by a large number of ascetics called Śramaṇas. These Śramaṇas soon gathered numerous disciples around them and then refused to accept the authority of the Vedas and the ideological and social norms based on the latter. They outrightly rejected the claims of the Brāhmaṇas and instead upheld those of the other *varṇas* (castes). Moreover, unlike the Brāhmaṇas who attached more importance to rituals than to eth-

ics, the new religious systems laid maximum stress on ethical norms of behaviour. Like the Upaniṣads all unorthodox systems such as Jainism, Buddhism and Ājīvikism believed in the laws of *karma* and reincarnation but disagreed with them on other vital questions. Between themselves they had many points of difference. Ājīvikas though severely critical of the Brāhmaṇas and the *varṇāśrama* by which they swore, had no positive philosophy of their own. On the other hand, both the Buddhists and the Jainas possessed systems of thought; but Buddhism was known for its moderation whereas Jainism advocated a path of extremism. Out of these three new creeds, Buddhism achieved the maximum success though ultimately it suffered a worse fate in the land of its birth than Jainism.

Around the first or second century A.D., India witnessed the rise of a vast Kuṣān empire which reached its height under Kaniṣka. At its height it became one of the strongest powers of the ancient world, on par with China, Rome and Parthia. Besides including Afghanistan and some parts of Central Asia, it covered the greater part of north India extending as far as Bihar in the east and the river Narbada in the south. The Kuṣāns left a deep mark on the historical and cultural development of many regions of the ancient world. Diverse peoples had been brought together within the confines of a single administration. Common ties had developed not only between the different parts of the Kuṣān empire but also with Rome, South-East Asia, China and Japan. Consequently the Kuṣān culture emerged on the basis of a synthesis of diverse traditions, though some of the local schools and trends continued to preserve their identity. The finest of classical traditions were also adopted as part of a common heritage. A prominent role in the Kuṣān art was played by the Bactrian school that was to exert its influence on the Kuṣān art as a whole. In the religious sphere toleration of diversity of beliefs was the hall-mark of the Kuṣān rule. It is a matter of great significance that the Kuṣān coins bear images of Iranian, Greek and Indian gods. This was in spite of the fact that Kaniṣka had a major interest in Buddhism. Even after the fall of the empire many of such common traditions and links between different parts of this empire endured. Thus the legacy of the Kuṣān period has left an indelible mark on the subsequent development

of many peoples of the East.

As in the Mauryan age, so at the beginning of the fourth century A.D., Magadha became a centre of a great political power. A new vast empire sprang up under the leadership of Gupta emperors, which reached the highest watermark of its glory in the reign of Samudra Gupta. Under him the empire became one of the largest in the East. Its influence spread far and wide and close ties were established with many other states. Samudra Gupta's successor Chandra Gupta II, popularly called Bikramajit or Vikramaditya, consolidated the Gupta rule still further and paved the way for even greater attainments in the growth of Indian culture. These attainments pertained to several areas, such as architecture, painting, music, science, technology, literature, etc. However, it has to be remembered that the process which reached its points of maturity during the Gupta period had started much earlier. This was equally true of the developments in the religious field. The unorthodox creeds of Buddhism, Jainism and Ājīvikism had all begun to lose much of the ground they had occupied earlier. First signs of a split of Buddhism into Hīnayānism and Mahāyānism had appeared as early as the Mauryan period. Once begun, the division grew wider and wider over the centuries, until in the time of the Guptas their common links came to be confined to the beliefs in the attainment of *nirvāṇa*, the law of *karma* and the teaching of the *aṣṭamārga*. Mahāyānism which had emerged as the greater vehicle over the centuries, had in course of time developed a number of new doctrines. Buddha was no longer viewed as a historical figure and was identified with the supreme power of the universe. The Mahāyānism believed in a multiplicity of Bodhisattvas and Buddhas and underscored their worship. These beliefs were quite alien to the original form of Buddhism, i.e., Hīnayānism. The Hīnayānists' approach to *nirvāṇa* was mainly individualistic. On the other hand, the Mahāyānists laid great stress on compassion and service of mankind and regarded them as the best means to attain the goal of *nirvāṇa*. In the matter of the language of religious writing as well, the new sect did not hesitate to make use of Sanskrit which was an anathema for the Hīnayānists. Still another line of departure was that whereas the Mahāyānists would not mind

keeping the images of some Hindu gods along with that of the Great Buddha, the Hīnayānists were totally opposed to it.

Naturally, the strengthening of Mahāyānist trends reduced the gulf dividing Buddhism from Brahmanical Vedism. The process was accelerated by the way the Brahmanical priesthood reacted to it. They, true to their long standing tradition of absorbing divergent elements into their own religious system, chose to include Lord Buddha into their own pantheon in the name of a reincarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. This conciliatory attitude was further aided by the trenchant criticism of Buddhist tenets by men like Śaṅkarācārya.

The Mahāyāna Buddhism had further fissures. The best known of these new schools of thought were Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. The fundamental tenet of the Mādhyamika teaching was the doctrine of *śūnyatā* (literally, the void), and for this reason this school is sometimes called Śūnyavāda. The greatest exponent of this school was Nāgarjuna who believed that everything that exists, whether material or spiritual, is unreal. He declared Lord Buddha's *dharma* to be nothing but *śūnya*. Nāgarjuna's ideas exerted a considerable influence on development of the religious and philosophical thought in ancient and early middle ages of our history. The founders of the Yogācāra school were Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. This school accepted only man's consciousness or mind as real and viewed the whole material world as an illusion.

By the beginning of the Middle Ages Hīnayāna Buddhism had practically disappeared in India after becoming the main religion of Sri Lanka and later South-East Asia. The Mahāyāna Buddhism survived longer but this too nearly disappeared between the 8th and 9th centuries and all its followers were gradually absorbed into Hinduism.

The rise of the Gupta empire coincided with the rise of a new form of Brahmanism called Hinduism. The amazing case with which the Hindu tradition absorbed various local religions, coupled with its philosophy which simultaneously admitted the existence of numerous interpretations in the form of schools of thought often independent of one another, the preservation and development of traditional social institutions such as the Varṇāśrama system,

all-served to make Hinduism an unusual religious synthesis, and for this reason was more acceptable to the people than any other Indian religion. The Gupta patronage of Brahmana lent great strength to the processes of religious change now at work. In the result, what emerged now was not a mere revival of the old Brahmanical creed but something new which was a blending of several old and new elements. The old Vedic divinities by now had lost their popularity. Most of the rituals laid down in the Vedas also by this time had become out of date. On the other hand, religious and philosophical concepts of the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavadgītā* were still held in great esteem and it was they, really, which paved the way for the new religious synthesis called Hinduism.

But Hinduism as it emerged did not represent a single school of thought. Three main schools, particularly, are worthy of note: Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Śāktism. The first school became widespread under the Guptas. Viṣṇu, who was in the beginning just one of the Vedic deities, gradually rose in importance. He was first identified with Nārāyaṇa a deity worshipped by the native tribes of northern India. Later Nārāyaṇa became just another name for Viṣṇu. In course of time he rose to the supreme position and his worship became the basis of Vaiṣṇavism. The great popularity of this religion may be explained in terms of the theory of *avtāravad*, which says that Lord Viṣṇu, appears from time to time in various garbs. This greatly facilitated the absorption of local beliefs and ceremonies of worship. In course of time all local deities such as Vāsūdeva, Kṛṣṇa and Rāma came to be admitted as just different incarnations of the same Lord Viṣṇu.

The growth of Śaivism and Śāktism was a simultaneous process. The R̥g-veda referred to Rudra as one of the Āryan deities. He was then considered a god of thunderstorms and hurricanes, surrounded by a host of cruel spirits hostile to man. The equation of Rudra and Śiva took place much later. Śiva is believed to have been taken from the pre-Aryan Harappan civilization. Gradually the name Śiva became more important and he was assigned a position almost equal to that of Lord Viṣṇu. The synthetic process was carried much further. Gaṇeśa and Skanda, who were important

local deities worshipped in certain other parts of the country, were brought together as members of a single family. Worship of certain goddesses was prevalent in some places. By the same process of synthesis, the male gods Viṣṇu and Śiva were declared to be husbands of those female deities, as for instance Viṣṇu as the husband of Lakṣmī and Śiva as the husband of Umā or Pārvatī.

The new religious developments led to the concept of Hindu *trimūrti* (Trinity) consisting of Brahṁā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. This concept is explained sometimes on the basis of division of functions. For example, Brahṁā is regarded as the god of creation, Viṣṇu as the god of protection and maintenance and Śiva as that of destruction. This interpretation is again an exercise in synthesizing the different modes of worship. However, the followers of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śāktism hold different views and each of these sects regards its favourite god as the supreme power having all divine attributes. Similarly in Śāktism, the worship of a goddess was not on the basis that she happened to be the spouse of one supreme male god or another but independently of the male gods and in her own right, representing the supreme power herself.

Changes were not confined to matter of religious belief and practice alone. Similar stirrings were noticeable in the realm of metaphysical thought, over a period of several hundred years extending on both sides of the Christian era. Even as early as the appearance of the first Upaniṣads, signs of conflict between two main philosophical trends, materialism and idealism, were visible. The chief exponents of the trend of materialism were Lokāyāts and Cārvākas. The other trend was reflected, in greater or lesser degree, in several other schools of thought. They are known as the six Darśanas which are called Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā and Uttara Mīmāṃsā. They all acknowledge the authority of the Vedas, the law of *Karma*, and belief in *mokṣa* (ultimate liberation). At the same time these schools differ considerably. On some points they are even opposed to each other. We need not go into any lengthy discussion of these systems of thought here. But one thing may be stressed that out of these, the system which made the maximum impact on later philosophical thought was the Uttara Mīmāṃsā, commonly known as Vedānta. But to

this we will turn later.

In a situation like this where there existed side by side such widely differing religious and religio-philosophical trends as the Brahmanism of the Upaniṣads, Buddhism, Jainism, Ājīvikism and when the philosophies of the different schools such as Sāṅkhya and Yoga were emerging, the need for a thoughtful survey and coordination of divergent elements could not be overlooked. The result was the production of the *Bhagavadgītā*. It forms part of Book VI of the *Mahābhārta* and is introduced as a dialogue between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, a Pāṇḍava hero, bearing on such themes as man's destination, essence of morality and relationship between the earthly and the divine. There are signs of interaction with different trends of thought prevailing in the country at the time and some of the new ideas have even been incorporated in it. But on the whole, it is a single, unified well-coordinated system of philosophy that we find in the *Gītā*. The purpose of the composition seems to be an attempt to reform the Brahmanical ideas within the framework of the orthodox Vedic tradition so as to consolidate that tradition at a time of major social and spiritual changes. In other words, the *Gītā* represents the priesthood's endeavour to adapt traditional Brahmanical dogmas to the needs of the new age, taking into account at the same time the achievements of other schools of religious and philosophical thought.

The philosophy of the *Bhagavadgītā* is important not merely because of the historical situation in which it was expounded. It has ever since remained a unique source of inspiration for all future generations of India. Further, it has been translated into a large number of world languages for the benefit of wider sections of humanity.

A few words regarding the Puranas may not be out of place here. Like the Upaniṣads or the six Darśanas the Purāṇas too were not composed at one and the same time. Their composition was also spread over several centuries. But they assumed their final shape about the period of the Guptas. The new form of Brahmanism, called Hinduism, had begun to arise about this time, which needed a new kind of mythology based on a mixture of metaphysics and history. This need was provided by the Purāṇic literature.

It also served the useful purpose of providing linkages between the old and the new beliefs.

The Guptas were followed by Hunas from Central Asia who carried devastation wherever they went. Punjab lost a great deal of her precious religious and cultural heritage due to their atrocities. Then came the Vardhanas of Thanesar (later Kanauj) under whose rule only a part of the Punjab formed part of their empire. The rest of the region was under the local chiefs.

The period from the 7th to the 15th century is marked by certain new developments in the religious and social spheres. Some of these developments were entirely new whereas some others occurred only within the framework of the older institutions. The Vedānta school of philosophy was as old as the Upaniṣads. One of the Darśans, Uttara Mīmāṃsā, had laid special emphasis on it. Later, Bādarāyaṇa had written a treatise on it. In the 8th century, a Brahmana scholar of Kerala, Śaṅkarācārya, wrote a commentary on it and recommended Vedānta as the best means of achieving salvation. He regarded Brahman (God) as the only reality, all else to him was illusory. Therefore, he held that the path of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*) is the correct and the only way of achieving liberation from the bondage of illusion (*māyā*). As against him, Rāmānuja in the 12th century stressed the worship of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa through the method of love and devotion (*bhakti-mārga*). Nimbāraka, Mādhava and Vallabha carried the idea of *bhakti* further and preached the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa as Viṣṇu's incarnation. In matters of detail they differed from each other but on fundamentals they were practically of the same view. The idea of *bhakti* in northern India was launched by Rāmānanda, a disciple of Rāmānuja. Unlike his spiritual guru and other advocates of the *bhakti-mārga* in the South, he preached the worship of Lord Rāma as Viṣṇu's incarnation. His ideas regarding caste inhibitions were more liberal and he had many low-caste people, like Ravi Das (a cobbler) and Kabir (a weaver), among his disciples. In the 16th century Caitanya in Bengal and Orissa was preaching the cult of Kṛṣṇa worship. Two points in this connection need special mention. The worship of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma dated from very old times but in the medieval period they were no longer regarded as human figures

but were taken as the very God Himself. Secondly, their spouses had also now been admitted into their respective cults. Now *Sitā-Rām* had taken the place of *Rāma*, and *Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa* the place of *Kṛṣṇa*.

All these were different brands of Vaiṣṇavism. Śaivism too had a number of forms including the one that believed in the worship of Lord Śiva through *bhakti*. Śiva-līṅga was considered the symbol of Śiva and worshipped as such. Quite a sizable section of the devotees of Lord Śiva, however, took to the path of asceticism, and were known as *Nāthas*, *Siddhas* or *Yogīs*. Their main object was to attain the spiritual stage of *sahaj-ananda* (equipoise and happiness). This was to be attained through the instrumentality of *yoga*. They generally cut themselves adrift from the world and lived the life of renunciation as recluses, depending for their livelihood upon public charity. Later on, they went astray and became more interested in the development of miraculous powers than in the achievement of their chief objective. Otherwise, they held liberal ideas. They were opposed to ritualism, veneration of *Brāhmaṇas* and the caste system.

Then there were Śāktas who worshipped one goddess or another as the supreme creative power of the universe. *Durgā*, *Kālī*, *Ambā*, *Naina Devī*, *Cintpūrṇī*, etc., were some of the various forms of the goddess chosen for worship. The worship of Śakti (the goddess) was often associated with Tantrism— a Hindu movement that was quite separate from the other currents and which had its own sacred writings, *tantras*, and its own ways of worshipping a deity, mostly a female one. The emphasis in Tantrism was on elements of mysticism and magic, and also on rites and conduct prohibited by Hinduism (orgies and marriage beyond one's caste).

Unlike the followers of Vaiṣṇavism Śaivism and Śāktism the Brahmanical priesthood unnecessarily paraded their knowledge of their scriptures. Their emphasis was more on the formal aspects of their religion than on its spiritual ones. Performance of prescribed rites and ceremonies, pilgrimage to religious places, observance of caste discipline, veneration of cows and *Brahmanas* and reading of religious texts were given the greatest emphasis by them.

Another school of religious thought was represented by a band

of Sants. Among them the most prominent names were Ravi Dās, Kabīr, Nām Dev, Tukā Rām, Ek Nāth, Rām Dās, Pīpā, Sain and Dhannā. They were devotees of neither Rāma nor Kṛṣṇa. They worshipped God Himself and had no faith in His reincarnations (*avatāras*). Their emphasis chiefly was on love and devotion and not on any formal mode of worship or asceticism. They were mainly drawn from the lower classes and were severe critics of Brahmanism and the caste system. This Sant tradition was subsequently carried further by Guru Nānak and his successors in the Punjab by evolving a synthesis of the Santa and the Nātha traditions.

Our account of the religious situation in the medieval age before the 15th century will not be complete without taking due notice of the new religious force introduced into the country by the advent of Islam. First Arabs tried to penetrate the Punjab from the south, but they could not advance beyond Multan. About three centuries later Ghaznavid Turks made their entry from the north-west under their leader Mahmud. They succeeded in establishing their sway over the Punjab up to the line of the Satluj. Their rule continued until it was replaced by the Ghorid Turks by the end of the 12th century. Thereafter, several Turkish and Afghan dynasties ruled successively before the Mughals established their empire in India. With the coming of the Turks a new religion, Islam, entered the country. In West Punjab, particularly, whole tribes like Tiwanas, Sials, Gakhars, Janjuas, etc., accepted the new faith with a view to preserving their social status.

Like the Hindus, Muslims too were divided into several sects, the most prominent among them being Sunnis and Shias. The religious leaders of the Sunnis who formed the bulk of the Muslim society were called *Ulama*, who corresponded to the Brahmins of the Hindu society. Like the latter the Ulama too laid maximum stress on the observance of the formal practices of Islam, such as daily *nimāz*, *rozā*, *haj*, and *zakāt*. They were also ever anxious to add to the numbers of their small community through conversation. Among the Muslims, Sufis represented the most liberal elements. They belonged to various orders or *silsilās* and on some points of doctrine differed sharply from each other. Still they helped create a conducive atmosphere in which the different communities

of the country could have peaceful co-existence.

The advent of Islam brought many new religious ideas into our country which were bound to have their impact on the Hindu society. The new situation thus created required a new thinking and readjustments, if necessary. Both the Brahmanas and the yogis of the Hindu society, however, reacted negatively to this situation. The Brahmanas sought safety in tightening up the stronghold of their caste system so as to keep their community from the influence of the new ideas. The yogis adopted an escapist approach and preferred to lead a life of indifference towards worldly problems. A vacuum was thus created which was filled by the emergence of a new leadership arising from the commercial classes. The new leadership recognized the urgency of a new socio-religious approach. It was in these circumstances that Sikhism, a new religion, made its appearance in the Punjab.

GURU NANAK AND THE HINDU HERITAGE*

K.L. SESHAGIRI RAO

A question is sometimes raised whether Guru Nanak gave humanity some new truth or whether he merely echoed the ideas contained in the Hindu heritage, especially, in the Upanishads and the *Bhagavadgita*. In my opinion, the question is neither proper nor fair ; for it ignores, firstly, the historical fact that the great leaders of the world are as much created by history as they are creators of history and, secondly, it ignores the fact that anything new soon becomes old except Truth which is valid for all times.

Truth is ageless: it is ancient, yet it is very modern. It is eternal. Guru Nanak makes this clear in the opening section of *Japji*:

In the beginning there was Truth
In all ages has there been Truth
Nanak, even now Truth is eternal
And evermore shall Truth prevail

It is this eternal Truth that Guru Nanak communicated to the world and not any new truth. Hence his teachings are valid and relevant today as they were when he lived and taught five centuries ago.

It is worth noting that no religious founder in the world has claimed that he has given to the world absolutely new truth. Each has claimed only to have transmitted the ageless Truth. In the process of transmission, however, every religious teacher has necessarily used the terminology and concepts of the heritage into which he was born. Jesus Christ used the concepts of Judaism, and the Buddha those of Brahmanism. This does not mean that they gave their support to all the Jewish and Brahminical beliefs and practices respectively. Similarly, Guru Nanak also freely used the lan-

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guage and categories of the Hindu heritage. But this does not mean he supported all the Hindu beliefs and practices. In fact he was the foremost to disapprove and condemn in a forthright manner whatever practice shocked his moral and religious sensitivities.

Guru Nanak realized the eternal Truth and showed others the path of God-realization. He did not base his authority on the *Vedas* or the *Upanishads*. The Truth which filled his mind was not borrowed from books; it came to him as illumination of his entire life. 'So says Nanak, so says Nanak' is the burden of his songs. He sang the songs of Divine Love. Out of the fullness of heart flowed his message—the message of love of God, brotherhood of man and the law of love in all human relations. He spread his message in a language intelligible to the ordinary man which, henceforth, came to be known as *Gurubani*. It has ever since brought comfort and peace to mankind in moments of stress and strain, misery and death. Its immortal appeal to the heart has continued to uplift humanity. The unsurpassed gift of *Gurubani* is one of the enduring contributions of Guru Nanak to India and the world.

Let me now take one or two instances in which Guru Nanak transcended his Hindu heritage and creatively related the eternal Truth to the needs and problems of his age. The acute problems of the Hindu-Muslim relations that confronted him is a striking example. The antagonism between the two warring communities had resulted in widespread misery. Guru Nanak brought home to his fellow men the idea that religion, worth its name, ought to bring the healing touch to the suffering and not to be instrumental in imposing tyranny, oppression and injustice. It is no office of religion to erect physical and emotional barriers between man and man. He insisted that Truth is for all and that it is a unifying force, never a divisive one. He stressed the fundamental truth of all religions and asked Hindus to become better Hindus and Muslims to be better Muslims. His teachings were through and through non-sectarian in character. He tried to eliminate the prevalent narrowness of outlook both from the followers of Islam and Hinduism. He endeavoured to bring the two communities closer to each other in mutual harmony and place. He worked for a brotherhood of the worshippers of the one God. His approach to inter-religious rela-

tions is still valid and very much needed today. Mahatma Gandhi in our own times has admirably followed the footsteps of Guru Nanak in this regard.

Take again the case of 'untouchability'. Guru Nanak vigorously protested against this inhuman practice and tried to root it out from society. He went further. He directed his attention to bring out fundamental changes in the thinking of his fellow men and their psychological attitudes. He unreservedly rejected the Hindu division of society into high and low castes. He declared that *only* by good actions can any man claim excellence and not by the exigency of birth. Under the inspiration of Guru Nanak's teachings, the institution of *langar*, was established in which the people of all castes or no caste, high or low, ate together as one fraternal community. By this institution, which has ever since been cherished and continued by the Sikh community, Guru Nanak dealt a severe blow to the practice of 'untouchability'. Here again, Mahatma Gandhi has remarkably followed up the principle and programme enunciated by Guru Nanak 500 years ago.

Guru Nanak's most distinctive contribution, I believe, is his evolving and presenting a way of life consistent with Truth. He laid great emphasis on 'true living'. He said : " Truth is the highest of all, but higher still is true living". Guru Nanak referred to ultimate Truth as 'Akal Murat' and 'Karta Purukh' and made Him the guiding-star of life; and exemplified that love of God makes for freedom, fearlessness and selflessness. True living for him consisted in following the 'will of God'. He taught that man should lead a life of self-surrender and dedication to God.

Guru Nanak asked his disciples to live in the world by the strength and under the eyes of God. He pointed out to his Hindu brethren that fastings and rituals have no value before God and were of no use to one's fellowmen. He stressed inwardness spiritually and the ideas of God, Grace and His worship in love and sincerity. He therefore wanted his disciples "to ceaselessly engage themselves in *simaran*, the remembrance of God and *seva*, service of fellowmen. Those who followed this way of life emerged as a self-sacrificing and creative community which continues to work as a leaven in the wider society.

Guru Nanak rejected all these elements in the Hindu heritage which were inconsistent with this dynamic 'way of life'. For instance, he condemned asceticism. He denounced those who retired from the society unwilling to fight the battle of life. He wanted men not to escape from evil, but to meet and overcome it. He insisted that men should perform all their duties in society and regarded that active life in the world as the best life. He approved all honest occupations as consistent with a religious life and held that the *summum bonum* of life, namely, salvation, can be obtained by man while living and working in society. He consequently stressed the importance of the married life of the householder; in it he saw the opportunities for love and God-realization.

To sum up, Guru Nanak took religion seriously and profoundly and made it meaningful and relevant to man once again. He comprehended the whole of life in the religious concern. He sharply protested against Hindu excesses and inequalities. He drew the attention of the Hindus to the core of religion and endeavoured to free it from self-seeking and extraneous elements which had smothered religious life. In the otherwise ever-changing world, he found the elements of permanence in the Name of God and His will. He gave God the central place in life and declared that if man is confused about God his whole life is confused.

SYNCRETISM AND THE FORMATION OF THE SIKH TRADITION*

PAUL B. COURTRIGHT

In the comparative study of religions, some scholars and most writers of introductory textbooks have categorized the religion of the Sikhs as a syncretism. They have regarded Sikhism as an attempt to reconcile and combine Hinduism and Islam in India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The purpose of this study is to examine the validity of categorizing Sikhism in this way. In the process of doing this we must consider briefly how the term 'syncretism' tends to be used in comparative religious study and then move to a more thorough analysis of the evidence upon which the claims for syncretism in the Sikh tradition have been based.

At best, the word 'syncretism' is vague; at worst it is highly emotive and misleading when applied to any religious tradition. The term has come to mean an attempt at a union or reconciliation of diverse or conflicting religious traditions. Scholars have used syncretism as a way of describing and categorizing certain religious phenomena at decisive points of inter-religious contact and influence. Used in this way, it has been a fairly useful term even though a vague one. The problems with the use of the term arise when it is used as a theological judgement. Western religions, that is, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, which point to specific revelatory events in history for the authority of their religious claims, have seen syncretism as a grafting of foreign elements to the purity of this revelatory authority. In this case, syncretism means a bastardization of the pure religion and therefore a threat to the truth of the faith. This use of the term as a

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theological judgement in the context of Western religions has given syncretism its emotive and pejorative character. This use of the term limits its value as a descriptive device for scholars. Even if a scholar carefully defines what syncretism is with respect to Sikhism that definition may not be applicable to certain phenomena in some Japanese religions which also may appear to be 'syncretistic.'

All this foregoing discussion of the term is to point out the problems involved with the word itself. Even given these problems, the phenomenon of religious borrowing and reconciling of diverse elements in traditions does go on in the history of religions. Whether one calls it synthesis, eclecticism, syncretism, or whatever, the phenomenon has to be dealt with. The question we now come to is, did this phenomenon of religion borrowing and reconciling occur in the formation of Sikhism as it has been argued? If it did not, then what has been going on in Sikhism and how is it to be explained ?

"Sikhism is the fruit of hybridization between Islam and Hinduism,"¹ writes A.C. Bouquet. J. B. Noss echoes this judgement in claiming Sikhism as an "outstanding example of conscious syncretism."² He goes so far as to entitle the chapter on Sikhism "A Study in Syncretism" in his textbook, *Man's Religions*. The prestigious historian Arnold Toynbee, in a foreword to the UNESCO-sponsored anthology of Sikh scriptures in English translation writes, "The (Sikh) religion is the creation of ex-Hindu religious enquires who adopted monotheism and rejected caste under the inspiration of Islam."³ To support this case even further, Khushwant Singh maintains, "Sikhism was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam."⁴ This is the usual interpretation. Sikhism is a synthesis drawn from Hinduism and Islam which consciously sought to reconcile the differences between these two great but opposed traditions.

Is this interpretation adequate ? In a larger sense Sikhism does stand historically and geographically in the midst of the confrontation between Islam and Hinduism in northern India. Sikhism cannot be totally explained from within Hinduism alone. It appears to have taken on certain beliefs, such as monotheism, which only could have come from Islam. But to pursue this deeper, we

must ask what is being synthesized or reconciled. Does what appears to be a borrowing from either Hinduism or Islam remain so after the evidence has been analysed? Does calling Sikhism a syncretism clarify or confuse our understanding of what is really going on in the development of this tradition?

To call Sikhism a syncretism implies certain presuppositions which we shall test against the evidence. First, it implies that Islam and Hinduism in India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were externally identifiable religious systems: That is to say that they both were great monolithic structures standing at odds against one another. Between them came Gurū Nanak trying to find the best of both, mix them together, and produce a new tradition acceptable to all. The scholar's job would be much simpler if there was a clearly defined Hinduism and Islam in India during this period. But, as we shall see, there was not. The religious complexion of the Punjab at the time of Guru Nanak and the Gurus following him was far more diverse than these presuppositions will allow.

The second presupposition behind this use of syncretism is that the origin of Sikhism, its ideas and institutions can be clearly located within the traditions from which they were borrowed. Take the example of Sikh monotheism. Who were the rigid monotheists in India at this time? The Muslims, of course. What would Muslims demand first if they were to consider becoming Sikhs? The belief in one God. The conclusion is then drawn that the Sikhs got their monotheism from Islam. The Sikhs were monotheists to be sure, but were the Muslims the only monotheists around at this time? Is the monotheism of Sikhism the same as or remarkably similar to that of Islam? Are there other possible explanations for Sikh monotheism than the one that seems most obvious on the surface?

The point here is that the presuppositions upon which the argument for syncretism is based are simplistic when applied to the complexity of the Indian religious environment to the time of the formation of the Sikh tradition. This raises a question about the accuracy and usefulness of the term syncretism insofar as it applies to Sikhism. But before we can decide whether Sikhism is a

predominantly syncretistic religion or whether the term has validity in this context, we shall have to look at the major development in the rise of the Sikh community and suggest some ways in which these developments may be understood.

The birth and growth of the Sikh community and faith become intelligible in relation to the historical circumstances of the Punjab in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It would be impossible to make any sense out of Sikhism without understanding this historical context, because Guru Nanak and his successors were preaching reform within both Islam and Hinduism and were offering a corrective for what they regarded as perversions in these two faiths. It is essential then to see what it was they were attempting to correct and why they spoke out at this time in history.

At this period in the Punjab it was a time of confusion, the breakdown of social and political order, the conflict of armies, religious fanaticism, and ethnic transition. Guru Nanak wrote about the times:

The age is like a knife. Kings are butchers. Religion hath taken wings and flown. In the dark night of falsehood. I cannot see where the moon of truth is rising... modesty and religion have disappeared because falsehood reigns supreme. The Muslim Mulla and the Hindu Pandit have resigned their duties, the devil reads marriage vows... Praises of murder are sung and people smear themselves with blood instead of saffron.⁵

Let us begin our look at the historical circumstances by examining the ethnic complexity of the Punjab, of Guru Nanak. The Mughals who invaded India the century before had settled down by this time and were claiming the Punjab as their home. Rājputs and Jāts had been migrating up from what is now Rajasthan and Gujarat. These groups were Hindu Kshatriyas and Vaishyas who possessed an independent and defiant character. The Jāts especially brought with them the *pañchāyat* tradition and a sense of democracy and communal solidarity. They all were disassociated from the traditional Brahmana hierarchy and felt more at home in the simpler Bhakti devotionism.

Traditional Brahmanical Hinduism was under fire from the fanatical expression of Islam which was espoused from time to time under the Mughals. This pressure forced a double reaction within Hinduism itself. One reaction was a retreat into orthodoxy.

Hinduism became more insistent upon ritual and the authority of the scriptures. The other reaction was reform. The simplicity of Muslim theology and worship had called the Hindu dependence on archaic ritual and language into question. The sense of equality in Islam judged the perversions to which the caste system had gone. Non-Brahmana Hindus began seeking an expression that would reach the true religious experience behind the formalism of both Islam and Hinduism. The chaos of the times called for a simple religious faith that could be understood and put to work by the common man. The Bhakti expression of Hinduism insisted on the worship of the one Lord behind his various religious forms and the equality of all men in their sincere turning to God. This was the basic direction of Hindu reform, and it was also the basic direction of the religion of Guru Nanak. In other words, Guru Nanak and the beginnings of Sikhism were a part of this reformist response to the perversion and chaos of the times. There were as many expressions of Hinduism within the Bhakti tradition as there were individual saints and Gurus to expound them. What is important to note here is that Hinduism in its response to the pressure from Islam became more diversified and complex, to the point that it becomes almost impossible to draw boundaries around it at all.

Before and during the period under reference not all Islam was fanatical in its attempt to exterminate Hinduism. Persian Sufi mystics who settled in the Punjab with the Mughals were attempting to make converts to their form of Islam. In doing so they communicated in terms and imagery that would draw a response from Punjabis. In the process they took on a similar character to much of Bhakti Hinduism. At this time in the Punjab some of the Sufis had more in common with the Bhaktas than they had with the orthodox Islam of the Mughals, and conversely some of the Hindu Bhaktas had more in common with the Punjabi Sufis than with orthodox Hinduism. All this goes to point out that we must be careful and cautious in outlining where, if at all, the syncretism was taking place. We have seen in outlining where, if at all, the syncretism was taking place. We have seen that both Hinduism and Islam wore many faces and were not great definable monoliths. The points of positive contact between the two traditions.

were at the level of popular, lay, pious devotionism. Their doctrines seemed less important than honesty of worship and philosophy less than concern for one's religious life and moral righteousness. It is out of this milieu of inter-religious contact that Sikhism was born. Even so there was limited contact between Sufi and Bhakta groups. We cannot automatically assume that, because Guru Nanak emerges out of an age of spiritual chaos and communal confrontation, he is a blending in equal parts of these two traditions. The picture of Guru Nanak is far more complicated and subtle. This brings us now to an examination of Guru Nanak, his relationship to Bhakti and Sufism, and the distinct stamp he put on the infant Sikh movement.

Guru Nanak presents the usual problem for the historian of religion. Like that of almost all founders of religions, Guru Nanak's life has been considerably embellished with the miraculous and the legendary in the Janamsākhīs or traditional biographies. Even the earliest account, that of Sewā Dās (c.1588), is already laden with legendary material. The result is that most of the stories of Guru Nanak's life are of little use to the historian. However, Guru Nanak wrote or dictated to a disciple a good number of hymns which are preserved in the *Gurū Granth*. These hymns will be more helpful in trying to get at a reliable picture of Guru Nanak.

We know that he was born in the Punjab in 1469. His life can be divided into three fairly distinct periods. The first was one of inward struggle and religious reflection. As a young man, he was employed by the Muslim ruler, Daulat Khan Lodi. During this period he laid the basis of his later teachings. He resigned from Daulat Khan's service and commenced to travel. He wandered through a good deal of northern India. Legend holds that he went as far west as Mecca and south as Ceylon. He definitely toured the Punjab as a wandering teacher gathering disciples and converting people to his message. In the last stage of his life he retired to Kartarpur where he set down his essential creed, and before he died he appointed a successor, Guru Angad, investing him with his own authority and gave him the responsibility of carrying on his work.

Guru Nanak's message was simple. Religion consisted in the

sincere worship of the true God. Guru Nanak's God was the totality of all things and the source of all things. He is transcendent, yet immanent. Guru Nanak's doctrine was so much devoid of credal exactness that it is impossible to trace precisely its origins. His ideas like those of many of the other medieval Bhaktas are reminiscent of the Vaishnava philosopher, Rāmānuja, whose theistic idealism was the fountain that fed these movements.

Salvation consisted in the repetition of and meditation on the true lord, the Name. In this way the worshipper attains purity and release from *karma*. The Guru was essential in this process of salvation because he provided the instruction necessary for proper meditation.

The main thrust of Guru Nanak's message was not theological and credal. Much of his writings in the *Gurū Granth* are denunciations of useless religious formalism. He began by launching an attack on the blind conventionalism of both Hinduism and Islam. He taught that religious men confuse the means of religion with the ends. They establish theological systems and patterns of worship as a means to realize God, but soon the systems and patterns become more important. The rituals and the doctrines become things in themselves. His famous saying, "There is no Hindu, there is no Musalman," which is used as an argument that Guru Nanak was a syncretist, simply means that the communal identities are secondary to the worship of the true God. Through this saying, he was arguing that both Hindus and Muslims had fallen away from the true worship. Guru Nanak realized that the oneness of God behind His various forms was more fundamental to the accidental and secondary religious distinctions. He called men to the true worship. He called them to remember first things first.

Guru Nanak's polemic was against religious and caste pride, formalism and scripturalism. His writings do not indicate that he intended to destroy Hinduism and Islam. Instead he was calling all men to be genuinely religious. The appointment by Guru Nanak of a successor was for the purpose of carrying on his message. The formation of a separate community and its defence became the central task of the Gurus following him, but he does not concern himself with this in any detail.

It has been argued by Toynbee and others that Guru Nanak called for the abolition of caste under the influence of Islam. There does not appear to be any clear evidence for this. Guru Nanak preached against caste pride. When caste became a cause for arrogance, it hampered religious quest rather than aided it. Guru Nanak did, however, offer his message of liberation through meditation on the Name to all regardless of caste. This was not a unique move for him. The point is here, as elsewhere in Guru Nanak's polemic, that religious pride—not religion—was his enemy. As Indubhusan Banerjee puts it, "Guru Nanak had not attempted a destruction of the social order but a reformation to suit the growing needs of the time."⁶

To the Muslim he said:

Make kindness thy mosque, sincerity thy prayer carpet,
what is just and lawful thy *Qurān*... Make right
conduct thy Kābā, truth thy spiritual guide, good works
thy creed and thy prayer...

And to the Brahmana he said:

Make the remembrance of thy Name thy loincloth and
frontal mark. . .
Make God's love thy worship, the burning of the love of
wealth thy incense.

Look only on the one God and search for no other.⁷

The above-cited quotations are characteristic of much of Guru Nanak's writing. He attacks religious formalism and prescribes the ethical response of love and reliance on devotion to God as the true religious life.

Guru Nanak rejected the authority of both the Hindu and the Muslim scriptures. This was tied up with his rejection of scripturalism in general. Any religious writing had validity so long as it was transparent to the true God who inspired it. Guru Nanak's view of the role of the Guru in the religious life precluded him from borrowing scriptural material both from Hindu and Islamic sources. If his chief purpose had been the reconciliation of the two traditions, he probably would have selected passages from the *Qurān* and the Shruti and Smṛiti literature of Hinduism which might have been consistent with the message he was preaching. Instead, Sikhism developed its own scriptural tradition with Guru

Nanak's writings at its centre.

We have seen that Guru Nanak must be understood neither as a reconciler of traditions nor as a self-conscious new initiator of a tradition, but he should be looked upon as one who provoked men to see the true worship behind the formalism of ritual. As Banerjee points out, It "was his primary concern to provide his contemporaries with a new viewpoint and a detachment which would enable them to understand the relative value of things in matters religious and to distinguish the fundamental from the secondary."⁸

We can best understand the foundation of Sikhism as a protest against conventionalism, and not against Hinduism and Islam as such. It was a protest against pride of worship, scripture and caste. So far we have seen no serious evidence that Guru Nanak was heavily influenced by Islam or that he attempted to reconcile Hinduism and Islam.

Before we go on to consider the development of the Sikh *Panth*, we should take a closer look at possible influences of Islam on Guru Nanak's thought.

We have argued so far that the origins of Guru Nanak's thought and religious approach are a part of the Bhakti renaissance which swept Hindu India from the ninth to seventeenth centuries. However, at the outset of this study we granted that in the broad sense Sikhism can be regarded as a syncretistic religion, because it stands geographically and historically in the running together of the rivers of Hinduism and Islam. We are trying to dispel the simplistic notion that Sikhism is a conscious syncretism or that it is primarily an attempt to reconcile Hinduism and Islam. This brings us to the question of how and where Islam feeds into the development of Guru Nanak's thought and the Sikhism of the Guru.

The only scholarly study on this issue has been done by W.H. McLeod.⁹ He argues that Guru Nanak's religion and that of Sikhism as a whole "is firmly embedded in the Sant tradition of Northern India, in the beliefs of the so-called *Nirguna Sampradāya*."¹⁰ The categories of thought and doctrines he employs are those of the Sants. Unfortunately no other information is available on who the Sants are, except that they are wandering pious devotees, another

of the many Bhakta groups which flourished during this period. McLeod goes on to argue that although there are certain Muslim influences which are worth noting, those influences were mediated through the Saints. This means that such syncretism as there was with Islam, specifically Punjabi Sufism, had already gone on before Guru Nanak's appearance. Guru Nanak is the recipient of an already syncretistic tradition in which Muslim influence had already become so interwoven into the fabric of Hindu Bhakta that it was impossible to identify it any longer as Muslim. This means that any Muslim influence that may be found will already have been channelled through mixed sources.

McLeod argues that as Guru Nanak rejected the conventionalism of Islam it would not be fruitful to search for Muslim influences there, but rather in Sufism and specifically in Punjabi Sufism which itself had undergone some Hinduization in the preceding centuries. Guru Nanak probably met and talked with Punjabi Sufis. The argument for direct influence from Punjabi Sufism is harder to document in Guru Nanak's thought than the argument of influence mediated through the Sant tradition. McLeod maintains that the two Sufi writings included in the *Gurū Granth* already demonstrate the stamp of Sant influence and most likely they may have been in their possession before they were passed on to Guru Arjun for inclusion in the *Gurū Granth*. So, then, even what appears to be clearly syncretism in the inclusion of Muslim writings in the *Gurū Granth* is a case of Punjabi Islamic mysticism already baptized into Hindu mysticism before it was passed along through Guru Nanak into the Sikh tradition.

There are references in the Janamsākhīs to encounters between Guru Nanak and Sufis. But, as we have already said, these accounts are not historically reliable enough to be of much use to the scholar. Instead, we shall follow McLeod's lead and examine Guru Nanak's language, key concepts, and literary style to see where any affinities with Islam might lie. McLeod points to an isolated *slok* which is obviously addressed to Sufis because it used language appropriate to that audience.¹¹ But because it is an exceptional *slok*, it argues against any significant encounter between Guru Nanak and the Sufis. On the other hand, because we do not

find any passages which are of a polemical character against the Sufis, it is safe to assume that he had no great quarrel with them. It seems most reasonable to assume that while he had no argument with them because their beliefs were sufficiently similar to his own, his direct contact with them was limited to an occasional conversation such as the one recorded in the *Gurū Granth*.

We can push this question farther and ask about the apparent similarities between Sufism and Guru Nanak. The emphasis on the oneness of God, revelation in creation, God's transcendence yet immanence, and the rejection of needless asceticism can all be found both in Sufism and Guru Nanak. This similarity has persuaded some scholars to think that Guru Nanak got these ideas from the Sufis. McLeod points out, in response to this, that the Sufi terminology for these ideas is conspicuously absent in Guru Nanak.¹² Whenever a Sufi concept seems to be obvious in Guru Nanak, the language expressing the concept is not Sufi. "In contrast to this relative absence of Sufi terms we find a wealth of Sant terminology and imagery derived from Hindu sources. Almost all of his basic terminology is of native Indian derivation."¹³ The force of McLeod's argument is that, although there are affinities with Sufism in Guru Nanak's thought, the sources of his thought can be explained more adequately from Hindu Sant tradition. Since we have already rejected Guru Nanak's closer ties with Islamic tradition, it is a more convincing argument to see even the Sufi influences themselves mediated back through Bhakti sources into Gurū Nānak's thought. This means that such syncretism as we may find in Guru Nanak is the result of a process of interpenetration which had already been going on before his time in the particular Bhakti tradition of the Sants.

Another reason for arguing against direct sufi influence is that some of Guru Nanak's key concepts are in conflict with Sufism. The doctrines of *karma* and transmigration of soul are the most notable examples. Even the argument Toynbee articulates that Guru Nanak got his monotheism from Islam cannot be sustained. The notion of the supremacy of one God behind all religious forms is expressed in the Bhakti tradition long before Guru Nanak. Had Guru Nanak drawn his monotheism from Sufism we would expect

to find Sufi terminology. The fact is that we do not find such terminology. This does not mean that Sūfism did not have some influence on Bhakti thought; it probably did. However, Guru Nanak's monotheism can be explained in terms of its Bhakti expression using local terminology and imagery. Sufism probably had some influence on Guru Nanak's predecessors, but it can hardly be shown that it provides a source for Guru Nanak's own position.

Even Guru Nanak's doctrine of the *hukam*¹⁴ shows this process of individualization. The word *hukam* refers to the Sufi concept of the 'divine will,' a personalized notion of Allah's activity in the universe. To Guru Nanak, the *hukam* is the divine principle of order by which the universe is maintained. It corresponds closely to the Sanskrit concept of the *rita*. What for Islam is a personalized direct involvement of God in the universe becomes for Guru Nanak an abstract principle of order. The term is clearly drawn from Sufi sources but the spirit of the term is different.

To summarize this investigation of Islamic influences, we have maintained that some influence from Punjabi Sufism can be detected in Guru Nanak's thought. This influence had already been absorbed into the Bhakti Sant tradition. Whatever direct influence there was from Sufism is minimal. As McLeod states, "... no fundamental components of Nanak's thought can be traced with assurance to an Islamic source. Guru Nanak's principal inheritance from the religious background of the period was unquestionably that of the Sant tradition and evidence of other independent influences is relatively slight. We must acknowledge that the antecedents of the Sant beliefs are by no means wholly clear and that within the area of obscurity there may be important features which derived primarily from Sufi sources."¹⁵ We are drawn to the conclusion that one cannot justify the statement that Guru Nanak drew his idea of monotheism or any other central belief, language or imagery directly from Islamic sources. The process of syncretism between Hinduism and Islam had already been going on for some time before Guru Nanak. He was an heir to this process and emerges out of a tradition which had already confronted and assimilated some Islamic influence. Consequently, Guru Nanak himself is not the syncretizing element in the development of Sikhism but comes

out of an age when exchange and interpenetration had been going on for at least three centuries before him. In the larger sense, Guru Nanak and the Sikh tradition can be categorized as a syncretism. But then much of northern Indian Bhakti Hinduism must also be so categorized. If this is done, the word loses its usefulness. Had the particular events that led to the formation of the Sikh community not occurred and had Sikhism been reabsorbed into Bhakti Hinduism, the whole issue of syncretism probably would never have come up. Because Sikhism maintains an identity separate from Hinduism and Islam, it must be categorized by scholars into some convenient pigeonhole. It would be more accurate to categorize the tradition as a revelation to which circumstances gave a separate and unique identity apart from Hinduism and Islam. Its dependence on Islam is so slight and secondary that to call Sikhism a case of syncretism is more misleading than it is helpful.

After Guru Nanak, the Sikh community began to take on a definite shape. After Guru Arjun's martyrdom, it became openly militaristic. This sudden shift from Guru Nanak's quietism to Guru Hargobind's praise of the sword has puzzled Westerners. The transition at first appears abrupt. Actually from Guru Amar Das on, the Sikh community became gradually more secular and concerned with its preservation and growth, Sikhism developed institutions of its own. The development of the community and its particular institutions can be adequately understood only in terms of its response to Mughal persecutions. The institutional developments show Sikhism's greatest originality and uniqueness. These institutions were largely demanded by the events of the time and show a marked departure from Sikhism's roots in the Sant Bhakti tradition.

The simplicity of Guru Nanak's message and his rejection of conventionalism and asceticism gave Sikhism a character of plasticity in the formative years, and the community was free to move as circumstances required. When Guru Nanak passed the office of Guru on to Angad, he made the most momentous move for the growth of Sikhism. His doctrine of the Guru made it an eternal office, necessary for liberation. The guruship secured religious authority for the Sikhs outside Hindu and Islamic sources of au-

thority. When Guru Arjun compiled the writings of the first five Gurus into the *Ādi Granth*, he gave the community its own scriptural tradition. The use of the vernacular in these writings brought a separate identity to Sikhism and helped establish a new literary tradition outside Sanskrit. All these factors helped to protect Sikhism from becoming reabsorbed back into Hinduism.

Yet the most effective means of establishing the Sikh tradition as a separate religion and community came with the persecution from the Mughals. After the death of Akbar and moratorium on religious persecution, Jahāngīr reasserted the supremacy of Islam. He felt that this new Punjabi religious group was a threat to Islamic dominance, and succeeded in having Guru Arjun executed.

By this time large groups of Jāts and Rājputs had been won to Sikhism. To it they brought their martial tradition and mentality. The simplicity of Guru Nanak's religion left room for the community to respond to the martyrdom of their Guru as they felt necessary. The response was defensive and militaristic. Guru Arjun's successor, Guru Hargobind, built up a defensive force to protect them. Increased pressure came from Jahāngīr and after him from Aurangzeb. The Sikhs realized that the Emperor's policy threatened their extinction. Their defensive reaction became offensive and, by the time of Guru Gobind Singh's leadership, the Sikhs had taken on a definite political character.

Khushwant Singh¹⁶ argues that this development culminating in the formation of the Khalsa can be best understood as an expression of an infant Punjabi nationalism. He posits an intriguing argument. The term 'nationalism' may not be the best one because of the connotations of the word in reference to the rise of the modern nation states in the West and in Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A more adequate explanation can be found by looking upon the response to persecution and the formation of the Khalsa as an attempt to protect the young community on the one hand and to establish its distinct identity on the other. The Sikhs did not develop an ideology that can be described as 'nationalistic,' but they were extremely concerned about forging a new brotherhood of believers who could survive the pressures of the time successfully and continue to include new converts to the

'true faith' given by the Gurus. Many of the particular military characteristics which the community took on were the result of the types of people who became Sikhs and of the kind of values they brought with them into the new brotherhood.

The formation of the Khalsa or militant brotherhood of believers under Guru Gobind Singh finally reconciled the community to a secular way of life. The more ascetically inclined had already formed a group called Udāsīs, and split off. The dominant secular wing had formed an ecclesiastical organization of religious administrators, *manjīs*, to oversee the propagation of the faith into new areas. It had established free kitchens, *langars*, where worshippers could eat a simple meal together regardless of caste. Finally, it had set up a system of collection of revenue from the community to finance the construction of temples, *gurdwārās*, and to outfit the army that was needed to defend the community. The Sikhs exercised considerable organizational talent which proved to be fruitful during the days of persecution.

It is not necessary for our study to go into detail about the organization of the Khalsa. The foregoing discussion is to point out that Sikhism in a defensive response to Muslim persecution sought its own identity as a religious and political community distinct both from Hinduism and Islam. Its organizational structure is more secular than it is patterned after the organizations of the Bhakti or Sufi cults. It was a case of making use of the organizational structures that were most suitable to the needs of the community.

When Guru Arjun compiled the *Ādi Granth*, he included in it some writings from Bhaktas and sufi saints who preceded or were contemporary with Guru Nanak. On this basis it has been argued that he was trying to reconcile Hinduism and Islam and to bring the authority of these traditions into Sikhism. This argument is not convincing. These Bhakti and Sufi writings were included because they were in basic agreement with Guru Nanak. If anything, the formation of the *Ādi Granth* itself was an argument that Guru Arjun was trying to fix the Sikh identity away from these two traditions. Had Guru Arjun wanted to reconcile them, he would have included portions of the *Bhagavadgītā* or the Shruti or Smriti scrip-

tures and the *Qurān* and the more established Persian Sufis.

An analysis of the names of those who became converts reveals that the great majority of them were Hindus. Indubhusan Banerjee points out that within the Sikh community the Muslim converts formed a kind of separate group. The baptism by the sword, the ceremony of initiation into the Khalsa, is a creation of the circumstances that led to the founding of the Khalsa itself. In summary we have seen the important developments in the formation of the Sikh community—the institutionalization of the guruship, the ecclesiastical organization, the establishment of the *Gurū Granth*, the militaristic defensive response to persecution, and the ceremonies of the Sikhs, which can be best understood as the results of the community under external pressure to unite and grow or die. They chose to grow. Their particular way of growing was dictated by the circumstances. Their energy was consumed with survival. There is no evidence to prove that they went out of their way to build a world faith, or even to make peace between Hindus and Muslims. As we have noted already, they alienated both the Brahmana hierarchy and the Muslim empire, and instead they created a distinct religion and community of their own. For a scholar to do justice to the Sikh tradition, it is imperative that he recognizes the unique circumstances in the development of its identity as a genuinely new and original religious expression.

In this paper we have tried to find out whether the widely held assumption of Sikhism as a syncretistic religion can stand up against the evidence the tradition offers. Our search has led us to consider seriously the history of the times in which Guru Nanak lived and spoke as well as the forces which led to the formation and growth of the community. We have found that Guru Nanak did not see himself, nor did his community see him, as a reconciler and synthesizer of Hinduism and Islam. He was more or less the opposite. He was a purifier of the popular religious expressions of both traditions. McLeod has shown that Guru Nanak came out of a Bhakti tradition which had previously absorbed and Hinduized some elements from Punjabi Sufi mysticism. It is more accurate to see Guru Nanak and the formation of Sikhism as an attempt at simplification of religious worship and the concentration on the Name of

the one God. The times were ripe for such an attempt.

We have examined the presuppositions which syncretism implies as it applies to Sikhism and found that they oversimplify and distort the religious complexion of the age and the subtlety and originality of Guru Nanak's own writings. Consequently, to classify Sikhism as a syncretistic religion will be a distortion. This will mean lack of appreciation of the particular factors in its development which were original to it and were the result of historical circumstances. Thus we have a better grasp of Sikhism's complexities and are led to understand it in its own terms. This is a more accurate and a scholarly kind of understanding, even though it makes the job more complicated.

NOTES

1. Bouquet, A.C., *Sacred Books of the World*, p. 313.
2. Noss, J. B., *Man's Religions*, p. 272
3. UNESCO, *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, p. 10
4. Khushwant Singh, *History of the Sikhs*, vol. I, p. 17
5. *Ibid.*
6. Banerjee, Indubhusan, *The Evolution of the Khalsa*, vol. I, p. 125
7. Macauliffe, M. A., *The Sikh Religion*, vol. I, p. 38
8. Banerjee, Indubhusan, *op. cit.*, p. 142
9. McLeod, W. H., "The Influence of Islam on the Thought of Guru Nanak," Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1966
10. *Ibid.*, p. 7
11. *Ibid.*, p. 8
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 13
15. *Ibid.*
16. Khushwant Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 38

THE ELEMENTS OF THE SIKH CULTURE*

AVTAR SINGH

Every culture is aided or hampered by the philosophical assumptions and views held in regard to the value systems by the members of the society. It may, therefore, be necessary to undertake a study of the value system of the Sikhs if we want to properly understand and appreciate its development. A detailed statement and analysis of the problem, however, is not attempted here. We shall confine ourselves merely to a statement in broad outlines of the moral values of the Sikhs.

An examination of the Sikh scripture, the *Adi Granth*, reveals that the Sikh Gurus, teachers and founders cherished a humanistic moral standard viewed in a spiritual context, Sikhism agrees with other great ethical systems of India as well as Christianity and Islam (in their general humanistic trends. Sikhism is concerned with the human existence and the need to improve it. The self has continuously to strive to be the ideal self, as a self in its social relationships. The uplift has to be of the whole self. The realization ought to be by consciously choosing actions in terms of their conduciveness to the ideal. And again, this realization, when attained, is to be reflected in one's actions.

The realized self is termed *Sachiara* by Guru Nanak. It is patterned according to the nature of the Absolute or the Real. The Ideal Self or the Real is described somewhat differently in Sikhism from other religious and philosophical traditions of India. Guru Nanak calls it Activity (*Karta*). Every person ought to reflect this *Karta* in his activity. The path of moral perfections as well as spiritual realization lies in and through actions. Guru Nanak says

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that a thing is judged by its activity (*Karmi karmi hoe vichar*).

A question may be asked whether Guru Nanak has given a list of definite actions or duties which will lead every one to his goal. In reply we may submit that persons are born in different socio-geographical environments, take up different vocations and live in varied family groups. This indicates a vast expanse of possibilities in terms of life-situations. Now, it should be conceded that if one is to compile a detailed list of duties, which would cater to all the life-situations, the list so prepared, apart from remaining incomplete, may also contain difficulties and problems associated with casuistry.

It is perhaps these factors which led Guru Nanak to lay down a general principle which could be applicable to all life-situations. The general principle, laid down by Guru Nanak, enjoins that "whatever be the duties, entailed by one's station, these ought to be performed to the best of one's ability till one moves into the next or a different station; then he should perform duties of that station". This notion of the duty of the stations is laid down in Sikhism by the tenet of *raza*.

In Sikhism, *raza* does not mean passive surrender to the universal will. According to Guru Nanak, it is active appropriation of the universal will as *integral* to the self. While applying this principle of *raza* one should remember that the socio-economic context of the house holder is alone accorded merit in Sikhism. Sikhism does not permit renunciation or escape from social involvement as a life-situation or a station. Further, it is necessary to note that one should not confuse the stations mentioned in Sikhism with any principle of social division on basis of castes or classes, since such distinctions have not been accorded any locus standi in Sikhism.

It is sometimes seen that a person who performs his duties faithfully and carefully becomes proud of his flawless performance of duties. This self-pride in course of time results in his alienation from the social environments and creates unbounded egoism. This leads to stagnation and prevents his further spiritual and moral growth. In order to exclude such a possibility from the path of the seeker, Guru Nanak stresses that spiritual realization is not ob-

tained by work alone; on the other hand God's grace is also simultaneously needed to make it spiritually effective. This provision of grace determines the spirit with which activity in respect to self-realization is to be pursued. Nevertheless, the stress on the necessity of moral actions for self-realization brings into broad relief the importance of moral values in Sikhism.

The objectivity of these moral values is ensured by grounding them in the Absolute but these are to be realized subjectively by the pursuer through their inculcation in his conduct.

Sikhism stresses on the need to practise some of the basic virtues. Every one, regardless of his station, is required to lead a virtuous life. According to Guru Nanak "devotion without virtues is impossible". We find very frequent stress on wisdom, truthfulness, temperance, justice, courage, humility and contentment as traits of an ideal conduct. It may, however, be noted that the virtues mentioned above are universal and should be practised by all. Sikhism does not accept the theory of specialised virtues – virtues exclusive to certain castes. In this sense Sikhism is closer to the general Western notion of virtues and is different from the Hindu view of specialised virtues.

Guru Nanak stresses also on the virtue of fearlessness and describes the ideal self as fearless. Therefore, it is an ideal for every one to be fearless and courageous. Similarly, wisdom is an ideal for every one and not a specialised virtue of any particular caste or class.

In the social sphere Guru Nanak asserts that the rights of each person are inviolable. The infringement of the rights of the other is as heinous a sin as 'eating of pork by the Muslims and beef by the Hindus'. The indignation due to the infringement of the rights of others is well explicated by Guru Nanak through the above analogy. It is a historical fact that this respect for the rights of the others is only characteristic of a highly progressive and cultural society.

While Guru Nanak does not give a comprehensive list of the human rights, we may infer a few of them through a careful study of his life and teachings. One of the important rights, which is central to Guru Nanak's social philosophy refers to the freedom of

the individual. The right to differ and to express one's difference is a fundamental aspect of the freedom of the individual. It is also the mainspring of creativity. One can also term it as democratic aggressiveness. The freedom of the individual should not be sacrificed at the altar of the communal, national or even humanitarian interest. In a misunderstood sense alone can democracy be interpreted as the right of the majority to dictate others to toe the line. The right of the enlightened individual to differ and command respect for his difference is an inalienable part of his personal right. This, however, is different from any sacrifice which a person willingly makes for the family, community, nation or humanity at large. The individual freedom is a necessary factor in the development of any culture. In this lies the strength or the weakness of any society.

The rights also entail duties. The dictum of Guru Nanak regarding the respect for the rights of others is basically a command to safeguard one's rights and if necessary fight for the rights of the others. The history of Sikhism is the portrayal of such a struggle for the rights of others. Sikhism, however, is not merely a sort of Social Reform Corps which only fights for the protection of the other faiths. It also envisages the fights of the individual for his own authenticity and freedom. These two are inseparable parts of his own rights. A person who cannot defend his own rights will not be able to defend the rights of the other after some time. This fight, however, is not to feed the separative individuality but to sustain a just social order. A continuous vigilance and struggle for the rights of the others as well as one's own is a necessary exercise for the maintenance of proper social health and culture.

We may now sum up the main features of the social philosophy and culture of the Sikhs. We have seen that Sikhism stresses the cultivation of the human self both from its empirical as well as spiritual aspect. In this context it is pointed out by Guru Nanak that a thing is known by its actions. Thus activity and creativity becomes the determining factor. The mainspring of the Sikh culture lies in the dictum of Guru Nanak that whatever duties are entailed by one's station, these ought to be performed to the best of one's ability. Every one should ceaselessly struggle for improvement. The Sikh culture is sought to be strengthened by sanc-

tifying the social. Sikhism also seems to broadbase the culture by laying down that all the virtues should be cultivated by all the persons. In the sphere of personal rights Guru Nanak is categorical about their inviolability. Any culture which does not guard the rights of its members is indicative of a lower level of development and doomed to disappear in the long run. The freedom of the individual plays an important part in the cultural philosophy of the Sikhs.

In the end we may add that the Sikh culture lays a high premium on courage and fearlessness. Thus are laid the bases for physical, mental and spiritual culture of the Sikhs.

GURU NANAK AS HISTORICAL MEMORY AND CONTINUING REALITY IN SIKH TRADITION*

HARBANS SINGH

Observance of the Gurus' anniversaries is a conspicuous feature of the Sikh way of life. A line frequently quoted from the sacred texts reads: *bābānīān kahānīān put sput karen*, i.e., it only becomes worthy progeny to remember the deeds of the elders. The Sikhs have a special word for these celebrations – *Gurpurb*, or the holy festival in honour of the Guru. Among the more important annual events are the birth anniversaries of the First and the Tenth Gurus, Nanak and Gobind Singh, and martyrdom days of the Fifth and the Ninth Gurus, Arjun and Tegh Bahadur. Alongside these may be mentioned Baisakhi, or the first of the Indian month of Baisakh, which marks the birth of the Khalsa Panth, inaugurated on this day by Guru Gobind Singh. What happens on these occasions is a mixture of the religious and the festive, the devotional and the spectacular, the personal and the communal. Over the year a standardized pattern has been evolved. Yet no special sanctity attaches to the form and variations can be, and are indeed made depending on the imaginativeness and initiative of local groups.

At these celebrations, the Sikh Scripture, the *Guru Granth*, 1430 pages in folio, is read through, in private homes and in the Gurdwaras, in a continuous ceremony lasting forty-eight hours. This reading, called Akhand Path, must be without interruption: the relay of reciters who take turns at saying the Scripture must

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ensure that no break occurs. As they change places at given intervals, one who takes over picks the line from his predecessor and continues. When and how the custom of reciting the canon in its entirety in one continuous service began is not known. Conjecture has traced it to the turbulent days of the eighteenth century when persecution scattered the Sikhs to far-off places. In those exilic, uncertain times, the practice of accomplishing a reading of the Holy Book by continuous recital is said to have originated. An interesting parallel is in Zen whose 600 sacred volumes are magically gone through in a single ceremony, the monks swinging the books overhead and reading the first and last lines.

Then, on *Gurpurbs*, there are special assemblies held in Gurdwaras, i.e., the Sikh places of worship, and discourses given on the lives and teachings of the Gurus. Sikhs march in procession through towns and cities chanting the holy hymns. The *langars*, or community kitchens in the Gurdwaras, become especially busy. To partake of the common repast there is reckoned an act of merit. For meals in the *Guru ka Langar* everyone is welcome on these special, as on all other, days and all eat together without distinction of position, caste, creed, or religion. Programmes for baptizing those not regularly initiated into the order of the Khalsa Panth as consummated by Guru Gobind Singh are undertaken. Sikh journals and newspapers bring out special numbers to mark the event. There are public functions held, besides the more literary and academic ones in schools and colleges. On *Gurpurbs* commemorating birth anniversaries, there might be illuminations in Gurdwaras as well as in residential houses. Friends and families exchange greetings. Coming into vogue are the printed cards such as those used in the West for Christmas and New Year Day.

Sikh fervour for *Gurpurb*-celebration had an unprecedented outlet in the tercentenary of Guru Gobind Singh's birth in 1967. The Guru Nanak anniversary was then in sight: this redoubled the enthusiasm. There is no indication that similar occasions previously had come in for any special attention. References are traceable to a proposal for celebrating the second centennial in 1899 of the birth of the Khalsa. Mr Max Arthur Macauliffe, famous for his prestigious 6-volume work on the Sikhs, made a mention of it in

one of his lectures on Sikhism delivered towards the close of the last century. But apparently nothing much happened. For the Tercentenary two years ago there was vast popular enthusiasm. It was, generally, channelled along the set, well-worn course. But there were certain significant developments. One of these was the creation of the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation. Started with a substantial donation from the Punjab Government, the Foundation is autonomous in character and aims, broadly, at the promotion of study in the fields of Sikh literature and culture. Another consequential development was the establishment of the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies at Punjabi University at Patiala. Studies in this department embrace five major religious traditions – Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim and Sikh. This is the first programme of its kind set up at an Indian university and the possibilities it offers of initiating a meaningful intellectual pursuit are apparent.

Preparations are now afoot for the quincentenary of Guru Nanak's birth. To direct the celebrations and plan the format a central organization called Guru Nanak Foundation was established in New Delhi by the Sikhs, with Dr Radhakrishnan who was then President of India as Patron-in-Chief, and Maharaja of Patiala as President. Besides private enterprise, the Government, both at State and Union levels, the universities and other institutions are helping develop programmes to make the remembrance meaningful and broad-based. The Punjab Government has announced its plans of opening, at Amritsar, Guru Nanak University. Seven of the existing universities in the country, including Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Panjab and Kuruksetra will set up Guru Nanak chairs. Several more have endowed commemorative lectures. The Punjabi University at Patiala has sponsored a seminar with distinguished scholarly representation from all over India and other countries. The Guru Nanak Foundation wishes to have in Delhi an institute, named after the Guru, for comparative study of religion. The Government of India will use the good offices of its ministries of Information and Broadcasting, Education, Communications, etc., to bring public eclat to the celebrations. Sikh communities in other countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, East Africa, Ma-

laysia, Singapore and Thailand are making their own plans. In the United States, the occasion will be marked by starting construction of Gurdwaras in the cities of Washington, New York and San Francisco: so far there is only one Sikh Gurdwara in this country and that is in Stockton, built at the beginning of the century. All eyes will, of course, be focussed on Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, now in Pakistan. A Center friend very generously gave me a few months ago a newspaper clipping outlining some of the preliminary arrangements that were being made in that country.

I realize that I owe the audience apologies for this rather heavy-paced recital of details, some of them admittedly trivial. Yet, they might have some relevance in reflecting the response of the Sikhs to the memory of the Guru which could aid in an understanding of him as well as the community that took shape around his vision. Visible in this response is an attempt at apologetics: also, the Sikhs' deep, unwearied commitment to their faith, their emotional attachment to the Gurus, their joyous and urgent participation in their historical tradition, their communal cohesion and their love of the spectacular. The Sikhs have always felt that their faith is not as widely known as it deserved to be. They are conscious of the limitation of their own scholarly presentation of their tradition which has kept it confined within provincial bounds. The fact of their being a small group numerically also imposes upon them a defensive self-consciousness. In the anniversaries and centennials—chronologies are already being studied to locate further likely occasions—they see opportunities for assertion of identity and for the projection of a heritage which they think has a larger meaning than hitherto given it.

For the Center for the Study of World Religions and, through it, for Harvard University to take notice of the quincentenary of Guru Nanak's birth is a kindly gesture. There is, I seek leave to submit, a special kind of appropriateness in this gesture. In honouring the memory of Guru Nanak, the Center is doing homage to one whose sympathies transcended all barriers, in whose integrative vision was realized the essential harmony of the religions amidst which he lived and who preached a peaceable, gentle

gospel of love and tolerance. In Guru Nanak's insight one comes across, perhaps for the first time, intimations of the kind of quest which might be the present-day concern of a Center like ours. It was an entirely happy thought of Professor Smith's to have a commemorative meeting in this historic year and he has thereby earned the gratitude of many more people than we can guess. The choice of the month is significant, too. Guru Nanak was born in the month of April—this is what modern historical research has established beyond question. Yet by custom his birthday has come to be celebrated in November. To recognize the April date thus has its own validity.

II

For recovering an historical memory of Guru Nanak our sources, it may be stated at the very beginning, are almost entirely traditional. On first sight, evidence about him seems abundant and easy to reach. The factual traits of his person are well established. In point of time he is closer than any other of the great religious teachers of the world. His era is no more remote than five centuries ago. He thus lived and preached in the full view of history. The ministry which began with him was borne on by his nine spiritual successors. This brought his name and prophecy in continuum to the beginning of the eighteenth century, i.e., till 1708, when the tenth and last Guru, or prophet-teacher, Gobind Singh, died ending the line of personal witnesses and bestowing the inheritance on the Holy Book, the *Guru Granth*. His followers cherish the immediacy of his presence with a rare faith and fidelity. In the psyche and consciousness of the people of North India as a whole, the image lovingly abides of that "gentle and most peaceable" of prophets. Song and story celebrate him. Legend abounds. His poetry has come down to us as spoken by him, with its characteristic symbolism and imagery, coined in the depths of his soul and its metres and harmonies modulated upon his lips. More than 900 of his *shabads*, or hymns, are in the Scripture.

It is possible to go to Talwandi, now Nankana Sahib, where he was born and find families who trace their ancestry back to his time. In that town one can see the places where he had his school-lessons or where he took shelter to avoid meeting an angry father

after what was considered to be one of his wasteful adventures. Villages and towns all over India preserve traditions recounting his visits during his extensive travels. His direct lineal descendants are with us. Written materials, if not copious, are in fair supply. Life-stories began to be compiled about five decades after Guru's passing away and have since multiplied. Yet from the historical point of view this testimony will remain inadequate.

His religious verse bears witness to the nature of God and man's duty, not to himself. One would look in vain in it for reference to any contemporary events or personal experiences in which his convictions were formed. This would be contrary to the very nature of his commission. "As the Lord sends His word so do I deliver it," he had said. He was a Guru, a teacher through whom light and truth were transmitted to man. His poetry was made for this purpose. Concern with the divine, the ultimate reality and the realization of human destiny in relation to it is the theme of the entire body of Sikh Scriptural texts which contains not only Guru Nanak's compositions, but also the works of five of the other Gurus and of some Hindu and Muslim saints. Guru Arjun, the Fifth Guru, who compiled the canon in 1604, applied rigorous standards and took only such of the hymns of the saints as were in accord with the Gurus's in their spiritual tone and meaning. He forbore to include the compositions of Bhai Gurdas, one of his most learned and much revered contemporaries who transcribed the first copy of the book from his dictation. The religious motive of his verse was immaculate and for this reason the Guru designated it as the key to the Scripture. But, because some of it contained eulogistic allusions to the Gurus and to certain details of their ministries, it was denied Scriptural status.

The first accounts written of Guru Nanak are known as *Janam-sākhīs*, or birth-stories. The *genre* which gained vogue towards the end of the sixteenth century, or the beginning of the seventeenth, has some peculiar characteristics. The Janamsakhis are written in Punjabi and represent the earliest extant models of prose in the language. The script is Gurmukhi, an alphabet which was refined and used by Guru Nanak for his own hymns. The form is episodic and the accounts are made up of a series of short disjointed narra-

tives. The texts are generally anonymous: out of the four distinctly categorized Janamsakhi cycles the authorship of only one is known beyond doubt. All of them relate to Guru Nanak and none to the later Gurus who, as successors to his spiritual commission, were entitled to, and in fact received, equal reverence. The Janamsakhi accounts tell their story in the language of myth and legend. There is no attempt at chronology. Even place-names are left vague or, in many cases, not mentioned at all. The incidents are sometimes incipient and seem to have been devised to illustrate and exemplify some of Guru Nanak's sayings. The pious embellishment takes stronger hold as time passes and the legendary and the miraculous preponderate in the later versions. The style tends to become more elaborate and the narratives wilt under the weight of loose detail. The Janamsakhis have also suffered by interpolations, the copyists' allowable margin of error as well as their arbitrary innovation, and deliberate distortion by schismatic and heretical sects. Many diverse versions are in circulation, more of them in old manuscripts than in printed copy.

There is no older source on the life of Guru Nanak traced so far than the oldest available Janamsakhi. It is doubtful if any exist. From the investigations of historians and researchers and from my own humble pursuit of the subject, it may not be entirely illegitimate to say that the chances of a major discovery are remote. In the first place, those times were disturbed and did not favour any sustained literary enterprise. It was especially true of the Punjab which had been in constant turmoil owing to invasion and warfare. Secondly, historiography had never acquired any considerable indigenous currency. The art was, however, not unknown to the Muslim ruling race and had in their hands manifested itself in some distinguished and enduring models. But these were, commonly, the annals of kings and their courts and, less frequently, the accounts of travellers or life-stories of Sufi ascetics. Contemporary with Guru Nanak was Babar's *Tuzuk*, or memoirs, a work of high literary genius. The Sikh tradition strongly subscribes to a meeting between the Guru and the Mughal Emperor. Babar gives in his book many interesting details of the campaigns and events he was involved in. He also describes the Indian life and customs and

writes minutely even of such matters as the people's style of eating their mangoes and drawing water from their wells. There is, however, no mention in these recollections that he met Guru Nanak. This will not be sufficient reason for rejecting altogether the possibility of such a meeting having taken place, though it does underline the fact that a persistent tradition about the Guru fails to elicit support from a likely contemporary source.

The Sikh learning itself was depressed by a series of crises. In 1704, when Guru Gobind Singh had to evacuate Anandpur under pressure of a protracted siege by the Mughal troops, a large quantity of manuscript material was washed away with the baggage in the river Sirsa which he had to cross. This was mostly the creation of the fifty-two poets the Tenth Master kept with him to make translations in the current tongue from ancient classics. Yet it was not unlikely that with this literature were swallowed in the Sirsa some prior documents accumulated over the years. Then the whole of the eighteenth century which was a period of persecution and stress for the community marked one vast gap in Sikh letters. The destruction and loss of manuscripts and documents during this time would be beyond estimate. What came through unscathed was the *Guru Granth*—the Guru's own word. This was held dearer than anything else and the Sikhs carried copies of it to their desert haunts and preserved them through peril and tribulation at the cost of their lives.

The reason for this will perhaps, eventually, remain elusive, but the Janamsakhis are by all odds the only means of information about the life of Guru Nanak. The canonical sources may be used to authenticate the perspective in terms of the Guru's own sayings and teaching; they will yield no empirical facts. The writings subsequent to the Janamsakhis may be illustrative of how his followers understood the Guru and his mission at a given time; they do not transcend the historical framework set by the latter. The local tradition obtaining at places sacred to his memory bears testimony to the forms of religious life that had their origins in Guru Nanak's work; it provides no definitive data. In result, the image of Guru Nanak that has come down the centuries is the one mediated by the Janamsakhis.

III

Now, how do the Janamsakhis preserve the memory of Guru Nanak ? I shall, in illustration, describe a few events from his life as narrated by them. Not all of these are contained in the four major Janamsakhis and, where an incident is common to two or more, the accounts differ mutually on details. I have taken the more representative ones as assimilated by common tradition.

Guru Nanak was born in a small village called Talwandi, now Nankana Sahib, forty-five miles south-west of Lahore. His father Kalyan Chand, shortened by the biographers to Kalu, of the Bedi clan of the Kshatriyas, was the village accountant and kept rent records of the estate of the local Muslim landlord. According to Janamsakhi accounts, prodigies attended the illustrious advent. Light flashed across the mud-built room in which the birth took place. The gifted and the wise in the celestial regions and below rejoiced in the happy event. The family priest who came to cast the child's horoscope told Father Kalu that his son would sit under canopy. "Both Hindus and Turks will pay him reverence: his name will become current on earth and in heaven. The ocean will give him the way; so will the earth and the skies. He will worship and acknowledge but One Formless Lord and teach others to do so ... Every creature he will consider as God's creation."¹

In the village, child Nanak was the favourite of both Hindus and Muslims. To quote from the *Janamsakhi*, "A Hindu chancing to pass by would involuntarily exclaim, 'Great is Gobind the Lord! Such a small child and yet he speaks so auspiciously. His words are as immaculate as he is handsome. He is the image of God Himself.' And if a Turk saw him, he would remark with equal enthusiasm, 'Wonderful is Thy creation, Merciful Master! How good-looking is the child and how polite his speech ! Talking to him brings one such satisfaction. He is a noble one blessed of the Almighty Allah.'"²

When Nanak was seven, he had to prepare to go to school. The Pandit was consulted about the day most favourable for him to begin. At school, he surprised his teacher by writing on his wooden slate what turned out to be a poem in Punjabi, a kind of acrostic which he had extemporized with verses matching each of

the thirty-five letters of the alphabet. In it he had reflected upon questions far beyond his years. The main one he seemed to have in mind was: "Who is truly learned?" Certainly not one who knew the letters of the alphabet, but "he who arrives at true understanding through these." This is known to be the first of Guru Nanak's extensive compositions which have been transmitted in the original and are preserved in the *Guru Granth*.

As Nanak entered his eleventh year, he had attained the age when he must, according to prescribed usage, be given the *Janeu*, or the sacrificial thread, as a badge of the upper caste to which he belonged. At the ceremony for which his father had invited many relatives and friends, he refused to take the *Janeu* and extemporized the following *shabad*:

Let compassion be thy cotton:
Spin it into the yarn of contentment:
Give it knots of continence and the twist of truth.
Thus wilt thou make a *janeu* for the soul.
If such a one thou hast, put it on me.
The thread so made will neither snap, nor become soiled.
It will neither be burned nor lost.
Blest is the man, O Nanak,
Who weareth such a thread round his neck.³

As a boy, he took out to pasture the family herd. Of this period the Janamsakhis relate several miraculous stories. While out with his herd one day, Nanak, it is said, lay down to rest under a tree in the summer afternoon and fell asleep. Rai Bular, the Muslim owner of the village, was riding by with his servants. As he reached near the tree under which slept the weary herdsman, he suddenly reined in his horse and stopped. He thought he had seen a strange phenomenon. The shadows of the other trees had travelled round with the sun, but not of the tree in front of which his horse stood. Rai Bular asked the servants to find out who slept under that tree. They said it was Kalu Bedi's son Nanak, and raised the sleeper. Nanak joining his hands saluted Rai Bular. The latter alighted from his horse, embraced Nanak and kissed him on his forehead. He said to his companions, "Nanak is not empty. On him rests God's favour. Today we have seen another wonderful thing. Watch the Lord's marvel! The shade of this tree remains

stationary for the blessed one. He is no ordinary mortal. Praise be to the Almighty Master!" Rai Bular did not mount again but walked home instead. He called Father Kalu and said to him, "Your son is a great man. He is honour of my town. Kalu, thou hast become exalted and I am also exalted, in whose town such a one has been born."⁴ Father Kalu said, "Of the things of God, God alone knows."

An ancient gnarled *van*-tree which is said to be the one that protected the Guru with its immobile shadow is still preserved in the precincts of a Gurdwara in Nankana Sahib.

Nanak was now about 16 years of age. He stayed most of the time out of doors tending his herd of cattle, consorting with way-faring sadhus and devoting his solitude to inward communion. Then suddenly a change came upon him. He grew silent and became immersed in his own thoughts more than ever before. He did not wish to stir out of his home; he ate and drank but little and lay in bed all the time. It was like this for four or five days. The parents were grieved and the neighbours rumoured that something had happened to Nanak. Mother Tripta, who had in a loving way always seen a purpose in whatever her son did and never raised a doubt or question, wondered what could have been the matter. She was pained to hear the remarks of the neighbours and, one day when she saw a group of anchorites pass along the street, she felt a sudden twinge in her heart. She hurriedly went to where Nanak was and spoke to him, "Son, I have seen some mendicants, perhaps on their way to far-off places of pilgrimage. I thought my own Nanak might not take the same route one day. Like them he might not go away to visit the hallowed spots. Son, my heart is restless. I say they left their mothers behind and likewise Nanak will go, too, leaving his mother to her loneliness."⁵

Nanak here uttered a hymn in which he said that he did not need to make any such journeys. He had turned his own heart into a temple and that was the object of his pilgrimage.

The physician, who was called in, held Nanak's wrist within his fingers and began to feel the pulse under them to diagnose the malady. Nanak told him that the sickness was not of the body and broke into the following *shabad*:

They have called the physician to try his physic:

And he grips the arms and searches it for ailment.
 Little doth the good physician know
 That the ache is 'in the heart.'⁶

The physician, a wise old man, understood what Nanak meant and assured Kalu that his son needed no healing. "He is himself free from infirmity and might well a healer be for others," he said.⁷

The mood resolved itself in Nanak's reverting to his usual manner. With a view to further diverting his mind and providing him with a permanent vocation, Father Kalu one day counted out to him twenty silver rupees and asked him to invest the sum profitably. On his way to the neighbouring market-town to purchase the merchandise, Nanak fell in with a group of hungry sadhus. He thought that he had come upon as good a bargain as he could make anywhere and spent the money his father had given him on buying food for them.

At Sultanpur, where Nanak had gone to stay with his sister Nanaki and carried on his spiritual vocation along with work in the Muslim Nawab's *modikhana*, he did not return home one day after his morning ablutions in the river. He remained absent for three days. This was an interval of a crucial mystical experience. The Janamsakhis have described it in terms of a direct communion with God. One of these says, "As the Lord willed, 'Nanak, the devotee, was escorted to His Presence. Then a cup filled with *amrit* (nectar) was given him with the command, 'Nanak, this is the cup of Name-adoration. Drink it... I am with thee and I do bless and exalt thee. Whoever remembers thee will have My favour. Go, rejoice in My Name and teach others to do so... I have bestowed upon thee the gift of My Name. Let this be thy calling.' Nanak made the salutation and stood up." The Voice spoke again. "Nanak, Thou discerneth My Will." Nanak recited what became the preamble to the first Sikh prayer, the *Japji*.

There is but one God. He is all that is.
 He is the Creator of all things and He is all-pervasive.
 He is without fear and without enmity.
 He is timeless, unborn and self-existent.
 He is the Enlightener
 And can be realized by grace of Himself alone.
 He was in the beginning: He was in all ages.
 The True One is, was, O Nanak, and shall forever be.

The Voice was heard again, "Who is just in thine eyes, Nanak, shall be so in Mine. He who receiveth thy grace shall abide in Mine. My name is the Supreme Lord: thy name is divine Guru."

"From Heavenly court a robe of honour was conferred upon Guru Nanak."

Then, says the *Janamsakhi*, the order was given to the ministers that they should take Guru Nanak back to the ferry. As he made his appearance on the third day, the citizens questioned each other in amazement: "He had fallen into the river. Whencesoever hath he come now?" The first words Guru Nanak uttered upon reappearance were: "There is no Hindu and there is no Musalman."⁸

Before the Nawab to whom complaints were made by the orthodox, the Guru recited the following *shabad*:

It is not easy to be called a Musalman:

If there were one let him be so known.

He should first take to his heart the tenets of his faith
and purge himself of all pride.

He will be a Muslim who pursues the path
of the founder of the creed

And who extinguishes anxiety about life and death;

Who accepts the will of God as supreme,

Who has faith in the Creator and surrenders himself to Him.

When he has established his goodwill for all, O Nanak,

Will he be called a Musalman.⁹

The *Janamsakhi* records. "When the Guru had uttered this *shabad*, the sons of Shaikhs, the Mufti, the Nawab, the chiefs and the leaders were all amazed. The Nawab said, 'Qazi, Nanak has arrived at the truth. Any further questioning will be futile.' All the people, Hindus and Musalmans, began to say to the Nawab that God spoke on Nanak's lips."¹⁰

Guru Nanak was now ready to go forth into the wider world with the message he felt himself called upon to discharge. He uttered a hymn of gratefulness. "An humble bard was I without occupation," he sang. "Praise be to the Lord that he has called me to work."¹¹ Dressed in a composite garb which belonged to none of the prevalent orders and which indeed was symbolic of his common message for all and accompanied by the Muslim associate Mardana, Guru Nanak set out on his travels which took him to all four corners of India and beyond. The travels occupied him for 24

years. In the course of these tours he visited places of pilgrimage sacred to Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. He shared the hospitality of humble homes and rested sometimes under bare skies. He went to small unknown villages and he visited the seats of the mighty. He mixed with simple, unlettered men, and he discoursed with the learned. He attended fairs and festivals, temples and mosques, hermitaries and *khanaqahs*. He spoke with individuals engaged in their daily trades and he preached to multitudes conveniently reached at ancient centres of pilgrimage. Many found peace in his gentle words of love and faith and were won over to his simple teaching.

The Janamsakhis present these journeys in a series of stories, parables and miracles. Early in his travels, for instance, he arrived at Eminabad, an ancient town in West Punjab. Here he stayed with Lalo, a carpenter, declining the invitation of a wealthy, caste-proud noble man Malik Bhago. As the latter chided him for eating with a lowly carpenter, the Guru sent for food from his kitchen as well as from Lalo's home. In the words of the *Janamsakhi*, "Guru Nanak took Lalo's coarse bread in his right hand and Malik Bhago's delicacies in the left. As he pressed both, milk dropped from Lalo's coarse bread, and blood from Malik Bhago's delicacies. The entire assembly was lost in amazement."¹²

On the highway, outside Tulamba, in south-west Punjab, lived one Shaikh Sajjan in apparent piety and prosperity. He maintained a mosque as well as a temple for use by Muslim and Hindu travellers and seemed to welcome anyone for a night's lodging and meal. Many a wayfarer felt relieved and grateful when, at the end of a day's journey, he was led into such a hospitable home. The sleeping guests were Sajjan's victims and their goods his property. After despatching the traveller with the help of his band of thugs, he would appear in the morning with his pilgrim's staff and rosary and spread out a carpet to pray.

In Guru Nanak's lustrous face the far-seeing Sajjan read the signs of affluence. The guest was therefore all the more welcome and entitled to more than usual courtesy. But at night the Guru tarried long before going to bed. Sajjan who had been waiting got impatient. At last, he came near the door to see inside the room.

Mardana was playing on the rebeck and the Guru was singing a hymn in enraptured devotion. The sight held Sajjan. The sweet music thrilled him. It calmed the agitation in his heart and he felt a new consciousness welling up in him. He fell at the Guru's feet and said remorsefully how sinful he was. The Guru assured him that he could yet hope for God's grace and forgiveness if he confessed and repented. Sajjan owned his sins and prayed the Guru for pardon. One condition was laid upon him; he must give away all of his possessions which he had collected by impious means. This Sajjan promised to do. He converted his house into a *dharamsala*, or place of worship and charity, and became a zealous disseminator of Guru Nanak's teaching.

At Hardwar, the ancient place of Hindu pilgrimage on the sacred Ganges, Guru Nanak stood with the pilgrims on the spot where the waters of the river were considered to be the holiest. As they dipped themselves in the river to perform their ablutions, the pilgrims prayed and tossed water in palmsful towards the rising sun in the east. The Guru took to throwing water to the west. The people were surprised to see this and wondered how anybody could act in such a sacrilegious manner. Some thought he was crazed in the mind; others that he must be a Turk. Soon a crowd gathered round him and began to question him, "Are you a Hindu or a Musalman? Why do you throw water to the west? Whom will it avail?"

"Whom will your water benefit?" he asked in return.

They told him that they were offering oblations to the spirits of their dead ancestors. This was for their satisfaction. Upon this reply the Guru continued his procedure with even greater earnestness. The pilgrims became puzzled. "What do you mean by offering water to the west?" they asked him again. "This is for my farm near Lahore which needs watering," said the Guru. The listeners felt amused and asked him how anyone could send water so many miles away.

"How far must our ancestors be from here?" asked the Guru, "My water has but to cross Sirhind and then Lahore is barely a stone's throw from there."¹³

The people realized that this was no common man and were willing to listen to him.

In Pakpattan, Guru Nanak met Shaikh Ibrahim, twelfth in descent from Shaikh Farid, the famous Sufi mystic. The Janamsakhis describe in a mixture of poetic metaphor and philosophy the discourse which took place between them.

On seeing Guru Nanak in the ordinary attire of a householder, Shaikh Ibrahim remarked:

Covet either the world , or covet Allah, the Creator!
Set not thy feet on two boats
Lest thou drownest all thy goods.

The Guru answered:

Set thy feet on both boats;
In both ship thy goods.
A boat will sink, a boat will go across;
For those who deal in true, everlasting goods,
There is no ocean, no drowning, no loss.

He told the Shaikh that to gain the divine one need not disown the world. In discovering harmony between the two lay the way to attainment. The body would perish, but the other boat, the soul, could be saved by living in the world in the spirit of a true seeker.

On return from his second *udasi*, a word commonly used for his preaching odysseys, Guru Nanak visited Multan. In this ancient town which had witnessed through the centuries history's most violent vicissitudes, there lived at that time many Sufi faqirs. It also contained shrines and mausoleums of several eminent saints such as Shaikh Muhammad Yusuf Gardezi (*d.* 1114) and Shaikh Baha-ud-Din Zikaria (*d.* 1266) and their descendants and successors. When they learnt about the Guru's arrival the *pirs* of Multan, says Bhai Gurdas, came out and met him with a bowl overflowing to the edge with milk. This gesture of theirs symbolized that the place was already full of religious teachers. The Guru laid upon the milk-bowl a jasmine petal indicating that he would still find room for himself without unsettling the others. And the Guru, says Bhai Gurdas, mingled there as do the waters of the Ganges and the sea.¹⁴

At the end of his extensive travels Guru Nanak returned to the Punjab to settle down at Kartarpur, a town he had himself founded on the banks of the river Ravi. Here he spent the last eighteen years of his life. From the Janamsakhi accounts, this

period witnessed the emergence of a growing fellowship of disciples around the person of the Guru. Whoever came ate in the *langar* sitting in a row with the others signifying surrender of caste scruples, engaged in *seva*, or physical labour in the service of the community, listened to the Guru's teaching and joined in reciting the holy hymns. The Guru himself resumed the duties of everyday life, and, alongside his responsibility as spiritual guide, worked on the farm and provided for his family. The most significant event of these years was the arrival in Kartarpur of one Lehna who came as a seeker and was in the end chosen by the Guru as his successor. When installing him in the position of Guru, Guru Nanak called him *Angad*, part and parcel of his own being and, as says the *Janamsakhi*, placing five copper coins before him, made obeisance at his feet.¹⁵

Thus does the oldest known *Janamsakhi* describe the last moments of the Guru's life. "The Musalmans began to say, 'We shall bury him.' The Hindus, 'We shall cremate him.' The Guru said, 'Put ye flowers on both sides— those of the Hindus on the right and those of the Musalmans on the left. They whose flowers remain fresh will have the choice.' Then he asked the assembly to recite God's praises and pulled the sheet over himself. When they lifted up the sheet, they found nothing except the flowers. The flowers of both the Musalmans and the Hindus were fresh."¹⁶

Such is the memory of Guru Nanak the *Janamsakhis* have bequeathed to history — a Guru, or universal teacher, gentle, humble and full of love and human kindness, melting into contemporary consciousness through his poetic utterance and straightforward example, the message divinely laid upon him, making no distinction between the Hindu and the Muslim, the high-caste and the low-caste, protesting, sometimes in mildly ironic terms and sometimes more forthrightly, against formalistic religious observances and prevalent injustices, and finally appointing a successor to carry on his teaching. This is the memory of him that survives to this day among his followers and admirers.

IV

Especially notable here are both the fact of the nomination of a successor and the nature of the succession. The successor, as

has been noted, was from among the disciples: in this choice the Guru's own sons were bypassed. The disciple chosen was made by the Guru equal with himself. He transmitted to him his responsibilities and, as sang the poets, his light as well. He saw the disciple in his own image and paid him the reverence due to the Guru when he proclaimed his succession. The procedure was repeated successively over eight generations. The Sikh faith thus had ten spiritual guides succeeding one another, who are regarded with equal adoration and honour by the followers as manifesting the same spirit and message. The succeeding Gurus were themselves conscious of the inheritance that had come to them from the First Guru. They were witnesses to the continuing presence of Guru Nanak: so was the community which was developing in their care.

Of this subtle relationship and the pervasive influence of Guru Nanak there is interesting contemporary testimony. Interesting, because it authenticates the living Sikh belief that all the ten Gurus partook of the same spirit and worked for the implementation of truths brought to light by the First Guru, Nanak. This belief, as is manifested by this evidence, is not a matter of reading history backwards. Satta and Balwand, the minstrels who recited the holy hymns for the Second Guru, Angad, thus sang in an ode which is preserved in the *Guru Granth*, "Guru Nanak invested Lehna with the mark of Guruship... He, i.e., 'Guru Angad, had the same light, the same method; it is the master who had changed the body.'" About the Third and Fourth Gurus, Amar Das and Ram Das, they said, "The wise being, Guru Nanak, descended in the form of Amar Das... The sect was astonished to see Nanak's canopy over Amar Das's head. Guru Amar Das obtained the same throne, and the same court... Hail, hail, Guru Ram Das ! God who created thee hath decorated thee... Thou art Nanak: Thou art Lehna; Thou art Amar Das."¹⁷

Bhai Gurdas, who is much revered in Sikh learning and piety and whose compositions were designated by the Fifth Guru as the key to the Scripture, said in one of his odes. "In his lifetime Nanak installed Lehna and conferred on him the regalia of Guruship. Guru Nanak turned himself into Angad by blending his light with him... Angad had the same mark, the same umbrella over his head and

was seated on the same true throne as Guru Nanak. The seal from Guru Nanak's hand passed on to Guru Angad's and thus was his sovereignty proclaimed... Lehna obtained the gift from Nanak and to the house of Amar Das it must descend." And, then, on to Ram Das, Arjun and Hargobind. "Arjun," says Bhai Gurdas, "transformed himself into Hargobind and chiselled his own image upon him."¹⁸

This awareness of the personality of Guru Nanak acting amidst them through the successor-Gurus was so permanent among the Sikhs that Mobid Zulfikar Ardastani (*d.* 1670) writing a century after him in his Persian work *Dabistan-ul-Mazahib* said, "The Sikhs say that when Nanak left his body, he absorbed himself in Guru Angad who was his most devoted disciple, and that Guru Angad is Nanak himself. After that, at the time of his death, Guru Angad entered into the body of Amar Das. He in the same manner occupied a place in the body of Ram Das, and Ram Das in the same way got united with Arjun... They say that whoever does not acknowledge Guru Arjun to be the very self of Baba Nanak becomes a non-believer."¹⁹

Guru Gobind Singh, last of the Gurus, himself wrote in his poetical autobiography called *Bachitra Natak*, "Nanak assumed the body of Angad... Afterwards, Nanak was called Amar Das, as one lamp is lit from another... The holy Nanak was revered as Angad. Angad was recognized as Amar Das. And Amar Das became Ram Das... When Ram Das was blended with the Divine, he gave the Guruship to Arjun. Arjun appointed Hargobind in his place and Hargobind gave his seat to Har Rai. Har Krishan, his son, then became Guru. After him came Tegh Bahadur."²⁰

This oneness, this unity of the Gurus came home to the Sikhs through their belief in the presence of Guru Nanak in them. For the Gurus themselves this presence was a constant reality, an inspiration and the norm in the exercise of their spiritual office. They wrote religious verse in the name of the First Guru. All their hymns in the *Guru Granth* bear the *nom-de-plume* of Nanak. Thus we have the compositions of Nanak I, Nanak II, Nanak III, and so on. They have a remarkable correspondence of tone and concept: in both utterance and deed later Gurus, Nanaks themselves as the

Sikhs believe, were acting out the intuition mediated to them from Guru Nanak.

The memory of Guru Nanak was in this manner operative in the subsequent Sikh development. The interplay of the original impulse and the exigencies of contemporary social environment set the course of this evolution. Challenges arose : new situations demanded and elicited new answers. Points of transfiguration were reached and worked out: yet it is possible to discern in this process a basic harmony and continuity attributable primarily to the ever-present Nanak legend.

Each of the successor-Gurus contributed towards the evolution of the creed and civil organization in accordance with the spirit of the teaching inherited from Guru Nanak and the existing historical factors. The Fifth Guru, Arjun, for instance gave the Sikhs their Holy Book, the *Granth Sahib*, and their Mecca, the Harmandir, nowadays the Golden Temple of Amritsar. In the Holy Book which he compiled he included the hymns of his predecessors and his own and of some of the saints of medieval India, both Hindu and Muslim. Among the latter were Ramanand, Kabir, Namdev and the Sufi mystic Shaikh Farid. The foundation of the Sikh shrine at Amritsar was laid at the request of the Fifth Guru by the well-known Muslim Sufi Mian Mir. To the growing intolerance of the ruling authority Guru Arjun responded by resignedly accepting martyrdom with extreme torture: his successor by sanctioning the use of arms. Seeing how peaceable means had failed to secure the rising sect immunity from oppression the latter recognized this as a lawful alternative. He chose himself a warrior's equipment for the ceremonies of succession and put on two swords, declaring one to be the symbol of his spiritual and the other that of his temporal investiture. The Ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was the second of the Gurus to be executed under Imperial orders.

History from henceforwards takes a more decisive turn. The events are well known. What might bear mentioning here is the point that, in this period of stress, hold was maintained on the insights which had till then been the guiding principles. The struggle in which Guru Gobind Singh became involved was regarded as God's way of fulfilling Guru Nanak's mission. Guru Gobind

Singh's own verse, no different from Guru Nanak's in its transcendental quality, bears witness to this. In practice, a strictly ethical and moral discipline was evolved and adhered to. No distinction was made between the Hindu and the Muslim. Several staunch followers of Islam did, in fact, align themselves with the Guru against the Imperial armies. Pir Buddhu Shah, a Muslim leader of considerable religious influence, took part in battle on his side along with his sons and disciples. A joint, harmonious Hindu-Muslim being was as much a reality in Guru Gobind Singh's vision as in Guru Nanak's. To quote a hymn by Guru Gobind Singh:

... Hindus and Muslims are one!
 The same Lord is the creator and nourisher of all;
 Recognize no distinctions between them.
 The monastery and the mosque are the same;
 So are the Puja and the Namaz.
 Men are all one!

This might well have been a quotation from Guru Nanak. Sensitivity to contemporary reality was not alien to Guru Nanak's own contemplation. In spite of the pacific temper of his teaching there is noticeable in it a note of sternness towards injustice, oppression and cruelty. Deeply telling was the reference, in the *shabads* known as *Babar-vani*, to the invasion of India by Babar's armies. The agony of the situation and the sufferings of both Hindus and Muslims were rendered by him in accents of intense power and protest. What happened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh was a natural consequence of the interaction of the impulse on which the emerging faith had been nurtured and the peculiar situation he was confronted with.

Guru Gobind Singh ended the line of personal Gurus and passed on the succession to the Holy Book, the *Guru Granth*. He declared to the Sikhs at the time of his death that the Word as embodied in the *Granth* would be the Guru after him. "The Guru's spirit," said he, "will henceforth be in the *Granth* and the Khalsa. Where the *Granth* is with any five Sikhs as representing the Khalsa, there will the Guru be." Then, in confirmation of the new rank bestowed upon it, he bowed before the *Guru Granth* and made offering to it.

For Sikhs the *Guru Granth* has since been the manifestation

of the Guru's spirit. Through it Guru Nanak lives on in the Sikh faith and tradition as a reality transcending the time-and-space setting. This awareness of the indwelling presence of the Guru has been of crucial importance to the Sikh community as a whole as well as to its members individually. It has been an impelling factor in their history; it has been their strength, hope and inspiration. It has given them unity, coherence and a sense of purpose and moulded their ideals, institutions and customs through the centuries. Singly and in groups they practise this presence daily when, in their homes and in the congregations in the Gurdwaras, they conclude their morning and evening prayers or prayers said at any other time as part of personal piety or of a ceremony with the words: *Nānak nām chardhī kalā tere bhāne sarbatt kā bhalā*— In Nanak's name we pray! May Thy name, Thy glory, O God, be ever in the ascendant, and, in Thy will, may peace and happiness come to one and all in the world!!

NOTES

1. *Janamsakhi Bhai Bala*, Rai Sahib Munshi Gulab Singh, Lahore, 1923, p. 6
2. *Meharban Janamsakhi*, ed., Kirpal Singh, Khalsa College, Amritsar, 1963, p. 11
3. *Guru Granth*, Asa, p. 471
4. *Puratan Janamsakhi*, Amritsar, 5th edition, 1959, p. 7
5. *Meharban Janamsakhi*, p. 61
6. *Guru Granth*, Malar, p. 1279
7. *Puratan Janamsakhi*, p. 12
8. *Ibid.*, p. 16
9. *Guru Granth*, Majh, p. 141
10. *Puratan Janamsakhi*, p. 19
11. *Guru Granth*, Majh, p. 150
12. *Janamsakhi Bhai Bala*, p. 81
13. *Meharban Janamsakhi*, p. 118
14. *Bhai Gurdas*, Var I. 44
15. *Puratan Janamsakhi*, p. 110
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-15
17. *Guru Granth*, Ramkali, p. 968
18. *Bhai Gurdas*, Var I. 46
19. See "Nanak Panthis" in *Panjab Past and Present*, April 1967, p. 55
20. *Bachitra Natak*, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, pp. 56-57

SCRIPTURE AND BELIEFS

ĀDI-GRANTH : THE SIKH SCRIPTURE*

PRITAM SINGH

Ādi Granth is the short title of the sacred book of the Sikhs, *Ādi Sirī Gurū Granth Sāhib* (Ādi, Skt., first, original, earliest; *Srī*, Skt. *Sriman*, honorific prefix; *Gurū*, Skt. *Guru*, dispeller of darkness, spiritual guide; *Granth*, book; *Sāhib*, Master, used here as an honorific suffix). Rendered into English the full title reads: *The Most Revered and the Original Guru: The Magnum Opus*. Some abbreviated variants of the title are also in common use, viz., *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*, *Gurū Granth Sāhib*, *Granth Sāhib*, *Gurū Granth* and *Ādi Granth*, although the original title of the book, compiled in 1604 by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, was simply 'pothi' (Skt. 'pustakah'; Pali 'pothaka', book or manuscript). Kesar Singh Chhibber's *Baṁsāvalī Nāmā Dasāñ Pāt Sāhīāñ Kā* gives 1601 as the date of the compilation. The use of prefix 'Guru' with the *Granth* dates back to 1708 when the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs, Gobind Singh (1666-1708), chose to put a stop to the line of human Gurus, updated Guru Arjan's *pothī* by inserting the works of his father, the Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur, and nominated the augmented Book as his eternal successor. Overnight, the Book became the Guru. The *pothī* acquired the highly exalted status of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*, "the ever-living, ever-awake, wish-fulfilling, boon-bestowing, embodiment of all the Ten Gurus, the abode of God, the spiritual protector of the Sikhs in this world and the next" (a part of the formal Sikh Prayer). Since its installation as the Guru, the Sikhs have always extended to this corpus all imaginable respect that is usually offered to the living *gurūs*. Whenever a Sikh happens to pass by it, he bows his head towards it. Not even

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a child is allowed to turn his back or feet towards it. Every person wishing to enter the premises of its abode, the Gurudwārā (Skt. 'Gurūdwar') has to cover his head and take off his shoes as a token of respect towards its august presence. Prayers are offered, supplications are made and offerings are respectfully presented by standing as faithfuls with bowed heads and folded hands.

The use of the adjective 'Ādi', before the *Granth* was introduced to distinguish the *Gurū Granth* from another voluminous anthology, known as *Dasam Granth* (Skt. Dashma-Tenth), *The Tenth Book*, which in fact, is an abbreviation of *Dasham Gurū kā Granth* or *The Book of the Tenth Master*, namely, Guru Gobind Singh.

The *Ādi Granth* is the most lavishly bedecked, the most richly apparelled, the most magnificently-housed, the most demonstrably venerated and the most ceremoniously apotheosized book of all times and places. It may be seen presiding, as a matter of daily routine, over all religious gatherings and most of the social and even political get-togethers of the Sikhs. A Sikh marriage has no legal sanction unless the *Gurū Granth* sanctifies and validates it, by being physically present in the centre of the ceremony.

The original compiler-cum-editor of the *Granth*, Guru Arjan Dev, was the fourth successor of the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak. Culturally, Guru Arjan Dev was one of the most well-connected personages of his time— the daughter of the Third Guru, Amar Das, Bibi Bhani, was his mother and the Fourth Guru, Ram Das, was his father. His maternal grandfather, Guru Amar Das and his father, Guru Ram Das, were influential leaders of men and have left for posterity their complete poetical works, now preserved in the *Gurū Granth*. His maternal uncle, Bhai Gurdas, was also an eminent poet of the Punjabi and Braj languages. His elder brother, Pirthi Chand also dabbled in poetry, while his nephew Meharban and Meharban's son Hariji were prolific writers of prose and poetry. Guru Arjan Dev, thus, grew up in an atmosphere of intense literary and religious culture. Early in life, he flowered into a major writer in the field of devotional poetry. Among other important contributions made by him to the nascent Sikh religious movement, during his tenure of guruship, one was that of giving a prac-

tical shape to the idea, already floating among the small but well-knit Sikh community, of having their own independent prayer book. Once his mind was made up, the 'Operation Pothi' was undertaken on a war-footing. A regular camp was set up at a shady place, which he named as Ramsar, not very far from the well-known people. As soon as the material had been collected, he went through the whole of it, critically sifting the genuine from the fake and dotting, as it were, the i's and crossing the t's thereof. A telling proof of this love's labour is still extant in the words 'sudhu' (Skt. 'suddha' correct) at the end of certain compositions (cf. pp. 91, 150, 475, 517 and 524 of *Adi Granth*) and 'Sudhu kichai', "please make corrections (as indicated)" in at least one case (cf. p. 323). He rejected straightaway every composition that did not conform to Gurmat (Skt. *Gurumat*), the Guru Ideology. He had associated with the project, from the very beginning, his scholar-uncle, Bhai Gurdas. In fact, the entire work of preparing the final authorized copy, on the basis of the material, verified and corrected by the Guru, was left to him.

After the completion of the 'Operation Pothi' the book was ceremoniously installed in the Harimandir, the Temple of God, which rises lotus-like from Amritsar, the Pool of Immortality, the pool to which the famous city of Amritsar in the Punjab, owes its name. The venerable Baba Buddha, one of the surviving followers of Guru Nanak, was nominated as its First Keeper. The compilation of the 'Pothi' was an event of great religio-philosophical, socio-cultural and literary import. Its impact on the course of Indian history, through the role played by its believers, was destined to be tremendous.

The contents of the *Granth* may be notionally divided into two parts, the main part consisting of devotional-cum-ethical-cum-philosophical hymns and the other part consisting of a few panegyric compositions, which also serve as documentary evidence left by the Bhattas and Dūms, the traditional keepers of records relating to genealogy and successions against spurious claimants to the Guru's office. Actually, however, there are three Parts – the Liturgical Part, the Musical Part and the Miscellaneous part. The liturgical part opens with the basic credal formula, called the 'mūl

mantra' (Skt. '*mulam*', root). It is followed by Guru Nanak's well-known composition, the *Japu*, which is recited by the devout Sikhs daily in the early mornings, along with the '*mūl mantra*'. Out of the next set of 3 compositions, '*So daru*', '*So purakhu*' and '*Sohila*', the first two are expected to be recited by every Sikh around sunset and the last, i.e., '*Sohila*', immediately before going to bed. Except for the last hymn of '*Sohila*', all the other 14 hymns, comprising '*So daru*' (5 nos.), '*So purakhu*' (4 nos.) and '*Sohila*' (5 nos.) have been picked up from the main body of the *Granth*, for daily liturgical purposes. Then follows the main body of the text – extending over 1340, out of a total of 1430 standardized pages, each composition of which is meant to be sung in the prescribed '*rāga*', preferably to the accompaniment of instrumental music. All the hymns of this part are arranged under 31 *rāga*-heads in the following order:

'Sri' (pp 14 to 93); 'Majh' (pp 94 to 150); 'Gauri' (pp 151 to 346); 'Asa' (pp 347 to 488); 'Gujari' (pp 489 to 526); 'Dev Gandhari' (pp 527 to 536); 'Bihag' (pp 537 to 556); 'Vadahans' (pp 557 to 594); 'Sorath' (pp. 595 to 659); 'Dhanasari' (pp 660 to 695); 'Jaitsari' (pp 696 to 710); 'Todi' (pp 711 to 718); 'Bairari' (pp 719 to 720); 'Tilang' (pp 721 to 727); 'Suhi' (pp 728 to 794); 'Bilawal' (pp 795 to 858); 'Gaund' (pp 859 to 875); 'Ram Kali' (pp 876 to 974); 'Nat Narain' (pp 975 to 983); 'Mali Gaura' (pp 984 to 988); 'Maru' (pp 989 to 1106); 'Tukhari' (pp 1107 to 1117); 'Kedara' (pp 1118 to 1124); 'Bhairo' (pp 1125 to 1167); 'Basant' (pp 1168 to 1196); 'Sarang' (pp 1197 to 1253); 'Malhar' (pp 1254 to 1293); 'Kanara' (pp 1294 to 1318); 'Kalyan' (pp 1319 to 1326); 'Prabhati' (pp. 1327 to 1351) and 'Jaijavanti' (pp 1352 to 1353).

In the '*Pothis*', i.e. the original manuscripts compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, there were thirty ragas in the same order. The thirty-first raga, 'Jaijavanti', contain only the compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Ninth Guru of the Sikhs. These were added to the '*Pothi*' by Guru Gobind Singh.

The arrangement of material in the musical part is rather complex but, by and large, uniformity having been observed throughout, it is easy to understand the compiler's system. While it is on the basis of musical measures that this part has been divided into

different chapters, the placement of individual compositions has been done on the twin bases of authorship and metrical form. Besides this, each rāga has been subdivided into Guru and non-Guru section. The Guru section has been arranged on the basis of the inter-se order of the Gurus. In the non-Guru section Kabir always gets the pride of place. Apart from maintaining the inter-se position of the contributors, the other inter-se arrangement, based on the poetical form of the contribution, has also been simultaneously followed. For instance the first place is always given to 'Chaupadas' (quadristanzaic hymns), followed, seriatim, by 'Astapadis' (octostanzaic hymns), 'Chants' (hymns with variable number of stanzas), ending with Vars (odes). The last part, i.e. the miscellaneous part, contains various metrical compositions not set to any musical measure. These, in serial order, are Guru Nanak's and Guru Arjan Dev's 'Salokas in Sahaskriti idiom; 'Gatha' 'Phunahe' and 'Chaubole' by Guru Arjan Dev; the Salokas of Kabir and Sheikh Farid; the 'Sawayyas' of Guru Arjan Dev, and the 'Sawayyas' by the Bhattas in honour of the first five Gurus, Salokas by the First, Third, Fourth, Fifth and Ninth Gurus and at the end the Rāgamālā—a composition around the authenticity of which has been raging a bitter controversy among the Sikh intelligentsia and which appears to be one of the earliest unauthorized interpolations.

The *Guru Granth* contains the complete or selected works of thirty-five persons, hailing from different parts of India and belonging to different castes and creeds. They may be divided into four different categories; namely, (a) the Gurus, (b) the Bhagats (*Skt. bhakta*), (c) the panegyrists and (d) the one-man category of Sundar, believed to be a descendant of the Third Guru. Given below is a complete list of these contributors with their approximate dates and places, where known. While the name of each contributor is prominently given at the top of each category of his work in the *Adi Granth* in categories B, C and D, the contributors in category 'A' are identified as 'Mahalla' I, 'Mahalla' II, 'Mahalla' III, 'Mahalla' IV, 'Mahalla V' and 'Mahalla IX', which stand for the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth and the Ninth Guru respectively.

Another fact, attention to which has been making the unwary commit serious mistakes about the authorship of the *Guru-*

compositions, is that all the six Gurus whose works are preserved in the *Adi-Granth* use Nanak as their nom-de-plume. The category 'A' consists of the works of six Gurus, whose names are Nanak (1469-1539), Angad (1504-1552), Amar Das (1479-1574), Ram Das (1534-1581), Arjan Dev (1563-1606) and Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675). Category 'B' comprises the Bhagats, namely, Kabir (Muslim weaver of Kashi, 1398-1495); Namdev (Calico-printer of Maharashtra, 1270-1350); Ravidas (leather-worker of Kashi, 1267-1335); Sheikh Farid (Muslim of West-Punjab, Pakistan, 1178-1271); Beni (not known), Dhanna (Jat peasant of Rajasthan, b. 1415); Jaideva (Brahmin of Bengal, 1201-1245); Bhikhan (Muslim of U.P., 1480-1573); Parmanand (Maharashtra, date not known), Sain (Barber from Rajasthan, 14th-15th centuries), Pipa (Rajasthan, b. 1425); Sadhana (Muslim of Sindh, Pakistan; date not known), Ramanand (Brahmin of U.P. 1366-1467) and Surdas (Brahmin of U.P., b. 1258). In category 'C' may be included the panegyrists, namely, Balwand, Kal or Kalashar, Jalap, Kirat, Bhikha, Salya, Bhalya, Nalya, Gayand, Mathura, Balya and Haribans— all Bhattas and one Dūm, namely Satta, who shares the authorship of a Var with Balwand, the Bhatt. The Bhattas have written panegyrical verses in honour of the first five Gurus. Two Salokas (*Adi Granth*, 553) of Guru Nanak in Raga Bihag are found in the name of Mardana (Musician of West Punjab 1459-1534)— Guru Nanak's companion in his odysseys.

While at one level, the Sikh scripture is the continuation of medieval India's powerful socio-religious movement called 'bhagati' (Skt. bhakti), at another, it is a complete departure from it. For example, it agrees with the 'bhagats' who believe in the existence of a single, conscious, all-pervading, all-surmounting Being, the ground of all phenomena, but it does not agree with those who found it necessary to worship Him in any personified or 'avatar' form. It shares with the 'bhagats' the view that the essential characteristic of all phenomenal existence is transience, but it differs from those who made this fact an excuse to run away from familial and other worldly responsibilities. It is one with the 'bhagats' in holding that it is the devotee's imperative necessity to have a Guru in order to realize the numinous reality within one's

lifetime, but it does not rule out the possibility of direct contact with the creator, either through the courtesy of His grace or as a reward for the seeker's devotion. It looks upon with approbation the bhagat's inward journey for discovery of one's self, but it lays equal emphasis on disciplined organisation of man's corporate socio-political life on non-exploitative, egalitarian basis. It outdid the 'bhagats' in making personal and social morality as the basic condition of spiritual growth, although according to one of its basic metaphysical postulates, both good and evil, ultimately, flowed from the same and the only divine source, namely, God.

The *Granth* is neither a text book of theology nor of philosophy; it is a poetical and musical tribute to the creator by a community of devout poets. It is a devotional hymnody composed with the specific purpose of celebrating the multifarious qualities of the Lord and while doing this all types of problems, physical and metaphysical come to be discussed, occasionally pointedly and mostly in passing. There are compositions, such as 'Siddha Gosta' by Guru Nanak, which concern themselves with specific cosmological, epistemological, ontological and/or ethical problems and it is from these and other similar compositions that a coherent view of the Guru-philosophy is formed. For example, the Granthian God is immanent and transcendent at the same time. He is beyond human comprehension, but is experienceable and realizable. Having created the universe with a bang, he runs the staggeringly massive show through universally-operative scientific principles (*hukam, bhai*), the inexorability of which gives way to none but His will (*bhāṇā, razā*). He responds to prayers, rewards the devotees and punishes the defaulters. Man, the acme of all creation, is mortal, but is capable of achieving immortality. Predetermination is qualified by the moral responsibility that goes with self-determination. It is man's emancipation from the shackles of space and time, achievable through regulated personal, social and spiritual conduct, with which the *Granth* concerns itself the most. The *Granth* lays great emphasis on the meditative remembrance of the nominative identity of the divine impulse (*nām*), the desirability and unity of mystic experience, strict control over psychosomatic passions of libido, ire, avarice, attachment and ego to bring about

equipoise (*sahaja*) and balance. It does not accept the sacrificial system of atonement. It rejects all superstitions such as magic, ritual, miracle, pilgrimages and purificatory baths. It is, in short, a simple, workable and practical type of humanism, which lays emphasis on equality of man, fraternal get-togetherness, social service and shared wealth. Its message is univesal and totally devoid of any sectarian bias.

Like all other major scriptures of the world, the *Granth* has also served as an agent of social enlightenment and progress. It has served as a booster to the habit of reading and writing in a country in which even the three R's very rarely reached the lower strata of society. It has encouraged people to work hard, engage in honest production of wealth, concede an honourable social status to womenfolk and develop respect for the rights of others. It refused to grant any spiritual or religious significance to the system of 'sati' at a time when it was a respected custom. It induced people to abstain from intoxicants, larceny, adultery, bribery, exploitation, duplicity, prevarication and haughtiness. God-fearing citizens with such qualities will naturally form good members of society, provided the administrative machinery is not anti-people or oppressive and is just—the qualities without which, according to the *Granth*, no administration is worth its name.

The Granthian postulate that the contingent nature of the physical world notwithstanding, it has to be treated as a solidly real extension of the divine entity, has put a distinctive stamp on the life-style of its followers. They love to live cheerfully, remain physically fit and instead of complaining, make quick adjustments with their circumstances. They never take to the begging bowl, nor do they turn into recluses. On the other hand, they prefer to engage themselves in productive work, however hard it may be, and strive to raise further their existing standards of living.

The *Adi Granth* must be given some credit for architectural enrichment of the world also. It is not the Golden Temple at Amritsar alone which elicits high appreciation from the spiritual seeker and the tourist alike, a number of eye-catching edifices built to house the *Granth* may be seen in almost all countries in which the believers in the *Granth* have settled in substantial numbers.

The influence of the *Granth* on post-*Granth* India's political history has not been fully realized yet, although it is this book, more than any other, which seems to have been thrown up by the Indian mind as a sort of indigenous defiance against further penetration of the semitic-Islamic cultural onslaught, which was downing, one by one, the different provinces of Northern India. By the time the *Granth* appeared on the scene, North Western Frontier Province, Baluchistan, Sindh, Western Punjab and Kashmir had been almost completely subjugated not only politically but also culturally. The remaining parts of Northern India, starting with Eastern Punjab, would have been similarly submerged if the phenomenon of Guru Nanak had not appeared in the 15th century. It was he who propounded for the Indian people the uncompromising principle of 'patt', i.e. honour—

If you have to live at the cost of your honour,

Each morsel that goes down your gullet is like forbidden food for you!

says Guru Nanak in the *Granth* (p.142). It is difficult for such exhortations to go unheeded when the *Granth* is regarded as the living Guru by its followers. A slow but qualitative change in the instinctive response of the Indian mind to political and cultural suppression and injustice is clearly visible, if the course of post-Nanak Indian history is perceptively observed.

It is interesting to view the vast panorama of history as it unfolded itself in the Middle East through the medium of script. Since the time of Caliph Umar, the educational policy of the Muslims towards their conquered lands, did not put any hurdle in the way of Muslim settlers and converts using local or national languages, provided these were written in Arabic script. Persian, Uzbek, Tajik, Turkish, Pashto, Baluchi, Sindhi, Western Punjabi (Lahandi), Kashmiri and Hindi are some of the languages which were extensively put in use by the Muslim writers. In fact, they were as good as pioneers in almost all these languages, but in each case Arabic or modified Arabic script was used with the result that their original scripts along with the bulk of indigenous literary and cultural treasures preserved in those scripts were lost for good. Guru Nanak did not want this ancient land of his to be cut off completely from its cultural roots. He, therefore, decided to use

the local script, later called Gurmukhi, for all his work. Thereafter, Gurmukhi script became the script of culturally resurgent, identity-conscious Punjab, tracing its roots to his own country rather than to Arabia or any other foreign land. Naturally, the script chosen for the *Adi Granth* was Gurmukhi. Consequently, almost the whole of non-Muslim literature produced in the Punjab before the arrival of Arya Samaj in this region, was written in Gurmukhi script, irrespective of the language used. Now it is a well-known fact of history that it was the Gurmukhi-knowing followers of the *Granth*, who, in course of time, struck a fatal blow to the Mughal empire. The Poet of the East, Muhammad Iqbal, confirms this fact indirectly when he bemoans, in another context, the decay of Islam in his *Javed Nama*: (From the heart of the Muslim disappeared the shining dynamism of mercury: who does not know what happened in the Punjab? The Khalsa (i.e. the Sikhs) carried away the sword and the *Quran* and that is how Islam died in this land).

The inspiration behind this remarkable turn of events of India may be traced unmistakably to the fear-removing, self-respecting, activist philosophy of the *Granth*.

In the same way, the literary and linguistic influence of the *Adi Granth* enshrining in its body the most representative devotional work of the whole of Aryan India of over 500 years, could not but be far-reaching and infectious. Thousands of its handwritten copies were in circulation before the introduction of the printing press; its recitation in homes and prayer-houses was a daily affair and some of its selected compositions were sung in the Gurdwaras every morning and evening. It is, therefore, not difficult to understand why its influence was so pervasive in the whole region, extending roughly between the rivers Sind and Yamuna. The religious books in Sanskrit had come to be associated, during this period, with the dead wood of ritual. The popular mood in favour of new scriptures in the languages of the people was, therefore, already there. The impact of this particular scripture, the *Adi Granth*, once it had come into being, was bound to be great. Apart from the orchestral play of different styles of expression, the *Adi Granth* is a treasure-house of poetical moods, emotive and imaginative word-pictures and striking similes and

metaphors. On account of its prestige, the *Granth* had become an ideal in the eyes of leading wielders of pen, as the examples of Haria and Darbari eloquently prove. Haria, or Hari Das, was the leading exponent of a small sect called 'Diwana'. He has left his works in the form of a compilation which is called *Granth Haria ji ka*. It begins with his own 'Japu', on the pattern of the *Adi Granth*, which opens with the 'Japu' of Guru Nanak, and is sub-divided on the basis of different musical measures. Hailing from the present district of Bathinda in the Punjab, Haria flourished in the second half of the 17th century. His work, which came to be regarded as the Scripture of Diwanas, is of considerable literary importance. Bhai Darbari or Darbari Das lived at Vairoke, a small village in the present Faridkot district in the Punjab. He authored a voluminous work structured mainly after the *Adi Granth* model. The work, captioned *Haria ki Pothi*, is dated 1803 and starts with the author's own 'Japu'. Bhai Darbari's period of active literary production lay in the second half of the 18th century. Both dictionally and thematically, the *Granth*s of Haria and Bhai Darbari are heavily indebted to the *Adi Granth*.

These two examples out of many should be sufficient to establish that the *Adi Granth* was able to generate a cultural climate in which people could take in hand major literary projects. It will not be an exaggeration to say that apart from certain romances and exclusively sectarian works relating to Islam and Hinduism, the bulk of prose and poetry produced in the Punjab, whether in Punjabi, Hindivi or Braj, owes its birth, partially if not wholly and indirectly, to the *Adi Granth*. Dated prose, especially produced by the Meharban School of Sikh Studies, is nothing but exegesis and exposition of the *Granthic* texts, hung often on biographical kegs. Poetry, starting with Bhai Gurdas (1551-1629), continues to exhibit, even today, the *Granthic* influence in one form or another. It is a fact that, till recently, anything written or printed in Gurmukhi script was considered to be sacred and was never trampled under feet. The position has changed a lot in favour of secularity but litterateurs who need to coin new words are finding the *Adi Granth* to be an indispensable linguistic source because it represents a linguistic tradition which connects itself more with Prakrit and

Apabhramsa than with Sanskrit. For such purposes the *Adi Granth* serves as a classical thesaurus, especially for such Punjabi prose writers as do not like to destroy the Prakritic character of their language, in the process of equipping it adequately to cope with the advances being made by modern knowledge in all fields of life. Purely literary borrowings from the *Granth* by poets include concepts, phrases, imagery, metres and verse-forms.

For an ampler perception of the extensive contribution of the *Adi Granth* to the history of literary culture in the medieval Punjab, one has to view it from the stand-point of the 11th century, when the hordes of Mahmud of Ghazni (967-1033) were making the local "infidel-centres" of indigenous culture "disappear like smoke" as Abu Rihan Al-beruni puts it graphically in his *Kitab-ul-Hind*. The few still living custodians of the local culture, we are told, escaped, helter-skelter, either to Kashi or to Kashmir, where the conqueror had not yet been able to put his foot. That the evidence of literary creation during the quincentenary following Mahmud is scanty, is borne out by all historians of Punjab's literature. However, suddenly, there is a spurt in literary productivity which starts with Guru Nanak and culminates in the compilation of the *Adi Granth*. In order to meet the various needs engendered by the scripture, there sprang up numerous centres of specialization in such disciplines as Calligraphy, Recitation, Exegesis, Lexicography, Poetics, Grammar, Comparative Philosophy and Devotional Music. It was thus that the gap caused by Mahmud was plugged by the *Adi Granth*.

The *Adi Granth* is, therefore, much more than a Sikh Scripture. Besides being a valuable spiritual heritage and an epitome of wisdom, it is a compendium of great historical, socio-cultural, literary and linguistic significance.

SIKHISM—SOME OF ITS FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES*

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB

Sikhism, a creed born in the Punjab in the revelation of Guru Nanak Dev (A.D. 1469-1539), is monotheistic in its fundamental belief, with inclination also towards monism and immanence of the Supreme Being in its mystical pronouncements. As a creed it bears strong affinities with the other Indian-born religions, in its terminology and some of its fundamental assumptions, but in its orientation it is a separate and independent faith distinct from Hinduism (Vedic Dharma), Buddhism, Jainism, Yoga-mārga and their various branches and divisions. The distinctive nature of Sikhism has been asserted right from its origins in the pronouncements of Guru Nanak Dev, whose teaching was opposed by the orthodoxy of both Hinduism and Islam. Subsequently, in the teaching of Guru Nanak Dev's successors to the Apostolic office, particularly Guru Amar Das (reign, 1552-1574), Guru Arjan Dev (reign, 1581-1606) and Guru Gobind Singh (reign, 1675-1708), the distinctive character of Sikhism has again and again been asserted. In later times still, particularly since the religio-cultural Renaissance of the nineteenth century, called the Singh Sabha movement, the distinctive religio-political character of Sikhism has been emphasized over and over again. To elaborate this point a little further, right from its beginning, Sikhism has been called Teesar Panth (the third faith) as distinct from Hinduism and Islam. It has also been called Teeja Mat or Teeja Din.

A view, expressed particularly by Western-oriented scholars has often been repeated that Sikhism stands mid-way between Hin-

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duism and Islam, and is a kind of synthesis of the two. This is a totally wrong notion, arising from a superficial study by those who have had little opportunity to study the original scriptural writings of Sikhism. While Sikhism has adopted certain fundamental postulates of the Indian philosophy, such as the doctrine of *Māyā* and its 'three qualities', the doctrine of transmigration, the path of *Bhakti* and such others, its approach has been highly eclectic. While rejecting the entire corpus of the Indian mythology, it has, however, adopted this and the epic and Puranic lore for purposes of illustrating and emphasizing spiritual and moral truths. This would be evident to anyone even on a cursory study of Sikhism. Image worship or the worship of any palpable object has been strictly forbidden, though the names of the Supreme Being have been adopted from the Indian tradition overwhelmingly, such as *Rāma*, *Parameshwar*, *Ishvar*, *Gopāl*, *Govind* and host of attributive names. Some such names from the Muslim tradition, particularly in their attributive aspects, too have been adopted, such as *Parvardigār*, *Rahīm*, *Qādir*, *Karīm* and such others. *Allāh* and *Khudā* too are found used. The use of such names implies not a belief in the doctrinal teachings of Islam or in its various aspects of faith, such as its angelology or even in the distinctive character of the Prophet Muhammad, but an attempt at instilling tolerance and goodwill in an atmosphere of religious bitterness and strife. With regard to its relationship with Hinduism and Islam, while Sikhism bears a resemblance to certain aspects of theistic Hinduism, it rejects a great part of that complex of faiths. As for Islam, none but the least perceptive will find any doctrinal relationship between it and Sikhism, though the Gurus appreciating the efforts of the Sufis at creating inter-religious goodwill, did adopt from their traditions a few terms like *mehr*, *razā* and *karma* to express certain aspects of the spiritual experience. Such terms were well established already in the common parlance and hence must have been found easy, familiar counters for use. Culturally and socially Sikhism and Hinduism, particularly in its theistic manifestations in the north, are close to each other, though Sikhism has rejected the caste system and untouchability to a very large extent. In that it has been the pioneer several centuries earlier of the modern humanist and enlightened reform movements.

BHAKTI—SOCIAL-ETHICAL CONSCIOUSNESS— CONCERN WITH LIFE

Sikhism among the paths of spiritual ascent has emphasized Bhakti along with *karma* or unegoistic action. While being essentially rational, it has discountenanced the pursuit of hollow philosophies. Gian (*jñāna*) in Sikhism stands not for intellectual learning or cogitation or the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, but for the vision, the state of spiritual illumination. This is achieved not through the study of books or logical disputation, but as a result of a life of Bhakti and beneficent action, and as stated in *Japuji* (36), in the realm where it is achieved, it blazes forth, bringing harmony, joy and bliss. So, obviously it is not some kind of philosophy but fulfilment. Alongwith this, Sikhism has rejected the path of holy mendicancy. Its great emphasis is on the prime place given to the life of the householder. Man embedded in the world of social responsibility, performing religious duties, pursuing the path of enlightenment is the ideal placed before the believer in Sikhism. Guru Nanak Dev's pronouncements in this context are very clear. In the measure *Gujari* (*Ashtpadiyan* I.I.) he affirms: 'A true preceptor involves himself not in worldly concerns: Following the right path, he is an anchorite (*yogī*) even though a householder'. The point of emphasis here is the spirit of renunciation of worldliness and not assumption of a monastic garb. In *Ramkali-ki-Var* (Mahalla III, 12 Sloka), in delineating such a householder, combining in himself renunciation of worldliness with fulfilment of moral duty, Guru Nanak Dev thus expresses his vision: 'The true householder restrains his passions: begs of God prayerfulness, austerity and self-restraint, and attunes his self to charity. Such a householder is pure as Ganga-water'. Guru Amar Das in *Wadhans-ki-Var* (Mahalla IV.4), disapproving the monastic way and garbs, affirms: 'Superior is the householder to those assuming such garbs, as he dispenses charity to others'. Such pronouncements can be multiplied from the *Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scripture. Man must be centred in the performance of duty and responsibility and no way be indifferent to moral issues. He is enjoined upon to perform *sevā* (lit. service) which is essentially disinterested service to others that among the Sikhs has assumed the form of an institution.

The *niṣkāma karma* of *Gita*, while somewhat different in its orientation, is essentially *sevā*.

Another consequence arising from the concept of *sevā* is the upholding of right and justice in the world and, if necessary, crusading for it. While in modern-day India with the religion-oriented political philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi, this may not sound unfamiliar, in the India of the earlier centuries, following upon the spread of Sikhism, such a doctrine would not be found easily acceptable. With the other-worldly and monastic ideal upheld by most Indian-born religions, Sikhism in its militant aspect appeared unfamiliar and Hindudom in its vast mass not only kept aloof from it, but was critical of Sikhism. It continues to be so still today, except among the enlightened, who have accepted the doctrine of religion interpenetrating life and regulating its activity. While Guru Nanak with his overwhelmingly mystical cast of mind would be more easily acceptable to the Hindu world, his last successor, Guru Gobind Singh, not less mystical but also the great crusader for uprooting tyranny, has been the object of attack on this score. But in criticizing Guru Gobind Singh it is forgotten that crusading for the right, fighting to establish a just society, is implicit in the spiritual teaching of Guru Nanak, of which it would not be possible to give examples in the short scope of this paper. (See Appendix)

Sikhism while it rejected the Brahminical ritualism as being empty and hollow without true devotion, even more vehemently rejected the entire system of Hatha-yoga as also its auxiliaries like Śāktism, Tāntrism and all the ethically unacceptable practices pertaining thereto. The path that the Sikh religion has commended is called Sahaj, the path of meditation and the purely spiritual processes. This path has been indicated by Guru Nanak in *Japuji* in the three steps of Suniyai, Mannei and Dhyān. This is in keeping with the ancient doctrine of *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. Added to these is Bhakti or devotion to which richly emotional and ecstatic expression is given in the spiritual poetry of Sikhism. Bhakti, however, in Sikhism is not mere fervour or emotional abandon unrelated to the sense of social responsibility. It is firmly associated with the performance of social good. In *Japuji* it is af-

firmed: *vin guna kite bhagati na hoe* (Bhakti without doing good is not approved). So, the path outlined for the Sikh is Sahaj, Bhakti and Sevā, summed up in the triad of Nām, Dan, Ishnān—that is, devotion, charity and personal purity. In keeping with the familiar way of expression in India, the perfection of this path has been designated in Sikhism as Sahaj-yoga, Rāj-yoga and Sāch-yoga. It is thus a synthesis of mysticism and a system of ethics. Mysticism without its ethical expression, as hinted just above, is not approved or acceptable. A term familiar in the Sikh religious system is Nām. Literally it means the name—Name of God—but in the esoteric sense it stands for meditation on and seeking union with the Divine Reality. There being no scope in Sikhism for any palpable object of worship, God's Name, an abstraction itself, is regarded as His manifestation. A synonym for Nām is Śabda (lit. Sound, Word, the holy Word) which is embodied in the Scripture and is the object of worship as the holy Book.

Sikhism like the other Indian-born religions believes in transmigration and the objective of the religious life is to secure release therefrom. There is no belief in a palpable heaven or hell, though terms like Baikunth, Svarg and Nark are used symbolically to express the spiritual states of God-consciousness or alienation from God. Consequent upon the doctrine of transmigration is that action and its retribution. From the circle of action and its consequences no release is possible except through Bhakti. In a figure that is very telling, it is affirmed by Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Arjan Dev that like a tiny spark of fire burning away huge mounds of firewood, devotion may efface sins of multiple births. Says Guru Nanak Dev on this theme:

People of the world! take not this to be an idle assertion—

A tiny spark of fire will burn away heaps weighing lakhs of maunds.

(Asa M. I. 32, page 358)

Related to the doctrine of action, keeping the self in the trans-migratory cycle, is the doctrine of Grace, which in Sikhism is a cardinal principle. In the cosmic Power, the Supreme Being, is centred the ethical elan, making for the upholding of justice and the balance of right in the universe. There can be no uncaused chastisement or penalty, each must bear in strict justice the conse-

quences of his deeds. Hence the ethical emphasis in life's conduct. But there is also Grace called Prasad or known by the Sufistic names of Mehr and Karam. God is also repeatedly called Dayāl or compassionate. It is from Divine compassion that the individual self is visited with Grace. To seek Grace the self must engage in prayer, devotion and doing right. Without these, Grace will not descend. Guru Arjan Dev has called the desire for Grace without devotion as unjustified as seeking the branch without the root. But Grace remains a Divine mystery. On some, those so conditioned or blessed in primal time, it descends, while on others seeking it assiduously it may not descend. Some are, so to say, Divinely elected for Grace; others have to earn it. But once the seeker with a pure heart seeks Grace, it most surely shall come. The great savant, Bhai Gurdas who made in verse the first exposition of the fundamentals of Sikhism, has thus expressed this mystery:

(Charan sharan Guru ek paindā jae chal

Satiguru kot paindā āge hoe let hain...)

Should the seeker take one step to seek the Master's protection,

The holy Preceptor a million steps towards him takes,

Should the seeker once meditate on the Master,

Again and again the Master in mind keeps him.

Should the seeker in sincere devotion a cowrie offer,

The Master on him all treasures confers.

To the holy Preceptor, ocean of compassion, beyond our understanding

We bow evermore; beyond comprehension is his reality:

APPENDIX

Sloka of Guru Nanak Dev:

Shouldst thou seek to play the game of love,

step into this street with thy head placed on thy palm:

Should you step on this path,

without demur offer your head.

From Alāhuniyān in the measure Wadhans, a disquisition on the mystery of death:

Blessed is the death of heroic men,

Should they die in an approved cause.

THE WORLD AND MĀYĀ IN SIKH COSMOLOGY*

WAZIR SINGH

The Sikh cosmology is an extension of the metaphysics of Sikhism and its doctrine of the Godhead. The Supreme Being of the Sikh view is the Creator-Person, who manifests himself through the process of cosmic creation. One essential feature of the cosmological speculation involved is belief in the pre-creation state of the Absolute. Religious cosmologies, adventurous as they are, tread upon regions beyond the pale of scientific investigation. Human fancy and creative imagination do play a significant part in the theories of creation and the creator found in the sacred books of the East and the West. Poetic intuitions of the prophets and religious leaders offer insights, which though not subject to verification, leave a powerful impress on the human mind. It is amazing how close affinity some of the cosmological beliefs of the Sikhs have with the Vedic as well as Semitic ventures in the field. Some features of the Sikh view of cosmic creation compare favourably with the cosmological models put forward by modern science. The age-old expression *Brahmand* (*Brahman+and*) literally means "cosmic egg" – an epithet that contemporary astronomy has thrown up to depict the embryonic state of the universe.

(1) COSMOLOGICAL FORMULATIONS IN GURBANI

Sikhism presents the intuitive insights of its mentors into reality and its modes, through the medium of poetry. While building up its doctrinal edifice largely on the conceptual foundations provided by India's philosophical heritage, Sikhism rejected the mythical and patently superstitious elements clouding the traditional think-

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ing. In its cosmology, Sikhism tried to do without the tales of a giant dismembered by gods, or the mating of a god-goddess pair. Guru Nanak treats such features of the tradition as figments of imagination. In contrast with the faith in "three deities" carrying on the roles of creation, preservation and annihilation, Guru Nanak puts forth his thesis that it is all Divine Will: God himself ordains the worldly ways and performs all the roles.¹

The depiction of Guru Nanak's pre-cosmic state of the Absolute is remarkably similar to Rigvedic creation-hymn. He talks in terms of the 'trance' of the Formless Spirit, the Absolute Void, the 'power' of Being, its creativity, and potentiality for manifestation and self-revelation. In his *Māru Solhe* composition, he says:

In the beginning was inexpressible darkness:
Neither the earth nor sky there was,
The Infinite Will alone prevailed.
Neither day and night, nor the moon and sun did exist
The Absolute Void was in eternal stance.
No source of creation, no speech,
No air, no water there were;
No production, no consumption, no arrival, no departure,
No lands or nether regions, not the seven seas
Nor waters flowing down streams...
As and when He willed, He brought the world into being
And vaulted heavens without support.
Created He Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva
And instilled in earthly beings
Sense of attachment over-bearing...
Establishing continents, worlds and underworlds,
From state of void unrevealed, Self-manifest became He.²

Guru Angad adds a note of Divine immanence in his cosmological formulation, in one of his verses:

This world is the Abode of the holy Lord,
The holy One abides in the world.³

In order to poetically depict the immeasurably long duration of the Absolute Spirit's self-absorption, expressions like innumerable eons of nebulous darkness, and thirty-six ages of divine 'trance' have been used by Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Das. "God makes and remakes the world." — "Like a skilful player, He performs the feat (of creation)." Elsewhere too, references to the repeated cycles of creation and dissolution are found. A major conclusion that

emerges is in regard to the concept of continual creation at the hands of God. As put by Fred Hoyle: "Of all the various possibilities that have been suggested, continuous creation is easily the most satisfactory."⁴

Guru Nanak's depiction of the immensity and vastness of the created universe is realistic enough:

Millions are the underworlds, millions float in space:

Despairing of the final count, Vedas give up stake.⁵

According to the Guru, "the Lord is engaged in the endless process of creation." Guru Arjan refers to the "reality" of the world on the plea that the creation emanating from the Divine cannot be false or unreal:

Real Himself, real is all He makes:

The whole creation from the Divine emanates;

If He so wills, expansion initiates:

If He so wills, all in One concentrates.⁶

(2) DIALECTICS OF CREATION

The Sikh view of creation equates the created universe with the manifest aspect of the Unmanifest. The formless, spiritual Absolute in its precosmic 'thought-free' phase is the hidden (*gupat*) reality, which in the cosmic 'thought-full' phase assumes the character of revealed (*pargat*) reality. The moment of transformation from the unrevealed to the revealed, from the unmanifest to the manifest, from the impersonal to the personal aspect, is the moment of creation. The pure, shapeless essence turns into cosmic existence, with all its contours and contents, evolutionary processes and infinite creative advances. What is potential in one phase becomes actual in the other. The transformation from the realm of possibility into the realm of actuality is, *suo moto*, absolutely free and unconditional. It is not caused by any external pressure, force, or circumstance, for there is nothing 'external' to the Absolute.

Philosophers have ascribed humanly contrived principles of love and strife, attraction and repulsion, unity and differentiation, integration and disintegration, in their attempts to explain the working of cosmic existence. Guru Nanak and his successors employ the terminology of *Sanjog* and *Vijog*, in order to convey their view of the ultimate principles governing the entire creation. "Unification and alienation drive affairs of the world." says Guru Nanak in

the Japuji.⁷ Guru Amar Das, in a similar vein avers: "God created the modes of Union and Separation, thus laying the foundation of all existence." In the fifth century B.C., the Greek philosopher Empedocles presented the hypothesis of Love-Hate forces acting in the world of nature. His view is not dissimilar to its Indian counterpart, viz., Sanjog-Vijog pair. The poet of Benati Chaupai talks in terms of expansion and contraction (*udkarkh and ākarkh*), as parallel cosmological principles:

When the Creator projects himself
The world and creatures all takes shape:
When He draws in and attracts
All embodiments relapse into Him.⁸

Perhaps the same principle is at the base of the modern Pulsating Universe (or the Oscillating Universe) theory, according to which the universe compresses and expands in alternating phases.

The whole intent of Gurbani is to accept the spiritual Essence as the origin and source of all existence. The pure 'essence' without an embodiment, in its blissful freedom, takes on the garb of 'existence'. The Spirit is one, it is unity though not a blank unity or pure void. From the one (that is, unmanifest aspect) it turns into the plural (manifest aspect). Again, from the infinity of forms, it returns to its original singularity. Pluralism inherent in the philosophy of existence, turns into monism that characterizes the metaphysics of essence. This is yet another dimension of the dialectics of creation in Sikhism.

(3) THE GOVERNING PRINCIPLE OF NATURE

The Supreme Being is depicted in Gurbani, not only as the author of creation, but also as the ordainer of the world. Sometimes, the universe is believed to be an emanation from the individuating ego in man, but this interpretation of the Gurus' compositions scarcely accords with the general intent of the Bani. Granted that the 'existence' of the world cannot be dissociated from 'experience'. Yet, this relation does not entail dependence of existence on experience. How does the world *appear*? It appears in the consciousness of living beings. But, who is the author of the world? Not human ego: it is the Supreme itself. Accordingly, the governing principle of nature is the Ordinance of the Divine, the *hukam*, that maintains the elements, the land and waters, the stars and plan-

ets, in fact the entire spatio-temporal cosmos and its processes. All matter, life and mind obey the discipline of that single absolute authority which transcends all discipline, control or order. All also is under the 'fear' of the One that is fearless in Himself.

The concept of *Hukam*, in the sense of Divine Ordinance pervading the cosmic existence, is also found in conjunction with the concept 'reza' – of Arabic origin, with a colouring of Sufistic thought. *Reza*, like *Hukam*, expresses a cardinal principle of the Sikh faith. "*Reza* is Divine Will, whose working is unknowable by man, though on man is laid the duty implicitly to obey this will, since it embodies the principle of the Supreme Good."⁹ From human point of view, *Reza* implies resigning oneself to the sweet will of God. However, as a cosmic principle it is Divine Will itself.

Besides *Hukam* and *Reza*, another dimension of the governing principle of Nature, according to Sikhism, is Divine Grace. Between the Creator and his creation, grace forms the nexus. It lends to the pure legality of *Hukam* an element of patriarchal consideration and affection. Grace is the divine response to filial sentiments of living beings. It is the cosmic interest in human affairs. Without grace, the Divine Ordinance would be a rigid, inflexible law, devoid of all "care". The Sikh view of cosmology presents the picture of a loving, caring, humane law-giver.

(4) THE STATUS OF MĀYĀ

Māyā as a philosophic category commands awe and respect in the Indian tradition. The Advaitic conception of *māyā* is designed to serve as the fundamental mode of existence endowed with unique and matchless powers. Its being is conceived as parallel to that of Brahman, for both are treated as beginningless (*anādi*) and beyond adequate expression in human terms. The world of names and forms is a product of *māyā*, which is indicative of its powers of creation and of concealing reality. Only to a spiritually advanced individual *māyā* ceases to be, and Brahman alone remains. By implication, *māyā* continues to exist for the rest of mankind, as an objective entity. It is this extreme objectification of *māyā* in the Vedantic theory, to which Sikhism does not subscribe. The Gurus do not assign to it the character of a metaphysical cat-

egory in the framework of their scriptural compositions.

Of course, the figures of Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva, as also of *māyā* frequently find place in the Bani, indicative of the link with the tradition of Indian thought. But these figures stand for the powers of the Divine in the Gurbani diction. Brahmā cannot be taken in the literal sense of a creator with absolute authority. Likewise, *māyā* as an independent creative power would be out of place with the spirit of Nanak-Bani. The only agency that governs the process of nature is nature itself as an embodiment of the Divine Ordinance. If this aspect of nature were to be identified as *māyā*, no contradiction would be involved, since the existence of nature is recognized in the Bani in the form of *qudrat* of the *Qādir*. However, if nature is viewed as an independent realm, final in itself, then the interpretation fails to cohere with Guru Nanak's over-all view of reality. He himself describes such a world as false— that is a world which is falsely viewed as real in itself, without the presence of its creative Spirit. The thrust of the poetic depiction seems to be that the world is real if the Divine immanence is realized in every part and corner of it; the same world is false and unreal if we fail to observe Him residing in the natural order.

Emphasis on the ephemerality and non-permanence of the cosmic order is perhaps the key to the interpretation of the Gurus' conception of *māyā* and the world. *Māyā* is that of which the essence is time: it has come into Being at the will of the Divine, and must disappear when He so ordains. In other words, Nature as creation is neither beginningless nor self-sufficient. It rests in the Creator, whose embodiment it is. Thus, *māyā* and *qudrat* (Nature) are identical in Gurbani. The world of nature may be taken as *māyā* incarnate, denying any special status or extraordinary existence to *māyā*. Accordingly, the world is not rejected as "illusion" in the Bani.

(5) MYSTERIES OF THE COSMIC ORDER

Philosophers and scientists, as well as spiritual visionaries are agreed on one point, that cosmology finds itself surrounded by some of the unresolved mysteries. Is the universe finite or infinite, bounded or unbounded? Guru Nanak in his own style answered the question—"millions are the underworlds, millions float in space;

despairing of the final count, the Vedas give up stake.”¹⁰ The extent of creation is not comprehended in full measure by anyone. And what the distances are like, traversed by the celestial bodies?—“In control moves the sun, in discipline moves the moon; billions of miles they travel, with no halt, no end.”¹¹ In terms of the temporal order, no one has been able to pinpoint the date of creation:

What the hour, what the time,
 what date and day?
 Which the season, which month
 when came the cosmic play?
 Knew not the pundits time,
 though given a hint in Purān;
 Knew not the *qāzīs* time, who composed the Qurān;
 Nor knows the yogi time — season, month or dates;
 He himself the secret knows, Who the world creates.¹²

Indian thinkers of antiquity and scientists of today, both talk in terms of the ‘cosmic egg’ — without solving the puzzle of its origin. Who laid the ‘egg’? And when? Since the phases of expansion and contraction are beyond count or estimation, how can one speak of the first creation? “As regards the beginning,” says Guru Nanak, “the best course is to admit to a sense of wonderfulness.” In our times, Dr Radhakrishnan has echoed this view by proclaiming that the meaning of mystery, the origin of the world, cannot be scientifically apprehended. Expressing his faith in the absolute freedom of the Absolute Being, he avers: “The mystery of the world abides in freedom. Freedom is the primordial source and condition of all existence; it precedes all determination.”¹³ Man’s non-knowing or *avidyā* is the most important meaning Dr Radhakrishnan gives to the term ‘*māyā*’; it comes closest to the Sikh view that equates *māyā* with delusion, making men overlook the divine principle operating in the created world order.

The Sikh view recognizes the principles of Hukam and Grace, bringing the living beings closer to the Creator. “Philosophically, *Hukam* is the apprehension of that mystery which underlies all existence, and which can express itself only in the action of submission and resignation.”¹⁴ The Sikh cosmology, based upon a profound theistic faith, finally eliminates the duality of Nature and God, existence and essence, through a formula that brings the Es-

sence within the ambit of Existence. Guru Nanak perceives the same Light everywhere and in every heart; for him one single Essence pervades and informs the entire multiplicity of the cosmic existence. It is not a case of Essence and Existence, but simply a case of Essence-in-Existence. And Guru Amar Das exhorts man to realize the same Essence in oneself:

You embody the very Light, O Man,
Recognize the Essence of your life.¹⁵

NOTES

1. Japuji: *The Sikh Prayer*, Ed. Wazir Singh. 1982, p. 31
2. Cf. Wazir Singh, *Philosophy of Sikh Religion*. Delhi: 1981, p. 45
3. *Guru Granth* (Vār Asā), p. 463
4. See *The Changing Concepts of the Universe* (A.M.U. Aligarh), 1967, p. 108
5. Japuji, op. cit., p. 23
6. *Guru Granth* (Sukhmani), p. 294
7. Japuji, op. cit., p. 31
8. *Dasam Granth*, p. 1387
9. G.S. Talib, *Japuji: the Immortal Prayer-Chant*, p. 87
10. Japuji, op. cit., p. 23
11. *Guru Granth* (Vār Asā). p. 464
12. Japuji, op. cit., p. 21
13. Schilpp (Ed.) *The Philosophy of S. Radhakrishnan*, 1952, p. 801
14. G.S. Talib, *Guru Nanak: His Personality & Vision*, 1969, p. 147
15. *Guru Granth* (Asā), p. 441

CONCEPTION OF JĪVANMUKTI IN GURU TEGH BAHĀDUR'S HYMNS*

L.M. JOSHI

1. INTRODUCTION

Indian philosophy can be called 'existentialist' in the sense that its central problem has been human *existence*. Quite early in the history of human thought Indian sages had discovered that human existence is *conditioned*. The discovery of human predicament—that is, of man's *conditioned existence*—and its corollary, the quest of an unconditioned sphere, constitutes the greatest achievement of Indian thought. The conditioned existence is called *samsāra*, *karma*, *bandhana* or *māyā*, while the unconditioned sphere is called *nirvāṇa*, *mukti*, *mokṣa* or *kaivalya*.

All the characteristics that characterize human existence, such as birth, aging, disease, nescience, decadence, suffering and death, are inherent in man's temporality. Since change is inherent in temporality, there can be no permanent peace and bliss in conditioned existence. Conditioned existence, therefore, is called *samsāra*. The word *samsāra* signifies not only change, journeying, and wandering through a series of embodied existences, it also signifies suffering, unpleasant situation, and bondage. Human existence is conditioned not only by historical and concrete factors—geographical, political, social, economic, religious, intellectual and psychological; it is conditioned also by trans-historical factors summed up in one word, *karma* or *māyā*.

Having discovered historical and trans-historical conditions of human existence, Indian teachers of spiritual wisdom also discovered the unconditioned goal of man's striving. The quest of

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freedom from change, the efforts towards deconditioning the conditionings, led them to the discovery of the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) or the Timeless (*akāla, kālāñita*). To attain this goal is to go beyond temporality and historicity; the vision of the Timeless takes one across the realm of the temporal. This attainment is called ultimate release. A person who succeeds in deconditioning all conditionings inherent in temporality, while still faring in the temporal realm, is called a *jīvanmukta*, emancipated while alive. This, in brief, is the heart of the doctrine of *mukti*.

It is a distinguishing feature of Indian religious history that a variety of perspectives of *mukti* and *jīvanmukti* have been offered by the various systems of thought and faith.

II. METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

Guru Tegh Bahadur (circa A.D. 1621-1675) refers to *mukti* several times and describes the state of *jīvanmukti* in some detail in his *bāṇī*. In this essay we propose to analyse and discuss the principal elements of the doctrine of *jīvanmukti* as found in his hymns. The subject is a profound one, and a study of its treatment by a seventeenth century saint-poet demands, on the part of a student, a good knowledge of background of the subject.

The ideal of *mukti* and the bhaktic way to it constitute the two most important strands in the theology of the entire range of medieval Indian religious literature. Some of the terms and concepts or the figures of speech and the figures of thought that we come across in the *bāṇī* of the ninth Teacher of Sikhism presuppose much of the moral and spiritual heritage of classical Indian thought. These terms and concepts are used by Guru Tegh Bahadur within the framework of a theistic soteriology which is, by and large, common to all medieval Indian theologies belonging to the *bhakti* tradition.

The same terms and concepts, however, had been used also by several non-theistic soteriologies, for example, by Jainism, Buddhism and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga, which are of greater antiquity than all the bhaktic cults. But there are differences between metaphysical presuppositions of theistic and non-theistic systems. These differences are of considerable importance, and we have to keep in mind the consequent differences in the meanings of those terms

and concepts that are employed commonly by both theistic and non-theistic traditions.

Let us not be misunderstood here. The religious philosophies of India fall into two broad groups: non-theistic and theistic. Jainism, Buddhism, the Sāṃkhya and the Yoga are non-theistic systems. They do not acknowledge the reality of God as creator and governor of the universe. Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Śāktism and Sikhism are theistic systems. Belief in the existence of God or Supreme Power as creator and governor of the universe is a fundamental feature of these faiths. It is not necessary to discuss here the differences between theistic and non-theistic religions, nor it is relevant to these introductory remarks to point out the mutual doctrinal differences existing among the different theistic religions themselves.

The relevance of bringing in the idea of God lies in this that the term *mukti* is extensively employed in the literature of theistic as well as nontheistic religions, but the conceptions and techniques of achieving *mukti* in theistic and non-theistic religions are not identical. The doctrine of God has influenced the doctrine of *mukti* in all theistic systems. The non-theistic systems, on the other hand, have worked out their conceptions of *mukti* without any relation to the idea of God. In short, the theistic soteriologies differ fundamentally from the non-theistic soteriologies.

The conception of *mukti* in theistic religions is thus different from that in the non-theistic religions. Like the word *mukti*, the word *nirvāṇa* and *yoga* are also universally employed in the literature of Jainism, Buddhism, Brahmanism and Sikhism. But their meanings are not identical in all these systems. Mere identity in linguistic expression should not mislead us. One and the same meaning of *mukti* may be found in several or even in all the religions, but this cannot be concluded beforehand. The meaning and conceptual content of the word *mukti* have to be ascertained after a thorough investigation into the context of its occurrence in a particular text or group of texts belonging to a particular religious tradition.

III. MUKTI AND JĪVANMUKTI

The word *mukti* is derived from the root *muc* which means 'to liberate'. The word means liberation, emancipation, freedom,

deliverance or release. In its technical sense it means ultimate release from conditioned existence. It is a metaphysical concept according to which supreme peace and final beatitude are attained by cutting off all the bonds and fetters. As a religious value of the highest order *mukti* or *mokṣa* is the final goal, the end of religious culture. It is a name of spiritual perfection. He who attains *mukti* goes beyond good and evil; the philosophy behind the ideal of *mukti* insists that it is impossible for a liberated being to do evil or to be lured by good. The attainment of ultimate release from *saṁsāra* or the realm of metempsychosis follows only when ignorance, desires and passions are completely eradicated.

Some of the cognates of *mukti* or *mokṣa* may be mentioned here with a view to illustrating its different aspects. The word *siddhi*, 'success' or 'perfection' is sometimes used as synonym of *mukti*. In a few texts *mukti* is clearly associated with *amṛtatva*, 'immortality'. Both the words, *siddhi* and *amṛta*, have played an important part in the soteriological theories of medieval Indian *siddhas*, *yogins* and *nāthas*. The Buddhist Pali literature is replete with the discourses on *vimutti*, 'liberation' and *visuddhi*, 'purification'. Both the words are synonyms of *nibbāna*. The term *visuddhi*, implies purification of the heart by destroying cankers or impurities; it is achieved by putting an end to the roots of *karma* and rebirth. The term *nibbāna* (*nirvāṇa*) means, on the one hand, extinction of the fire of passions (*kleśas*) and craving (*trṣṇā*), and on the other hand, attainment of the Immortal Realm (*amarapada*). One of the important cognates of *mukti* is *bodhi*, 'awakening' or 'enlightenment'. This word indicates the important position or wisdom (*prajñā*) in the total conception of *mukti*. The word *kaivalya* means 'isolation' or 'detachment' of the spirit from the matter. Its special meaning fits in the pluralistic systems of Jainism and the Sāṁkhya-Yoga where bondage is conceived in terms of the association of personal self or soul (*ātman*, *puruṣa*) with matter or *karma*. Two more cognates of *mukti* are *niḥśreyas*, 'that which is certainly superior' or 'final beatitude' and *apavarga*, 'culmination' or 'fulfilment'. All these words, viz. *mukti*, *mokṣa*, *siddhi*, *amṛtatva*, *vimutti*, *visuddhi*, *nirvāṇa*, *bodhi*, *kaivalya*, *niḥśreyas* and *apavarga* mean the ultimate release or supramundane goal

understood from several points of view adopted by several systems of Indian thought.

The origin and development of the idea of *mukti* is an important subject of research which, however, falls outside the scope of the present article.

The ideal of *mukti* is practical and realizable. A saint who attains *mukti* is called *mukta*, 'liberated'. Several terms such as *buddha*, *arhat*, *siddha* and *śuddha* refer to the liberated person and are synonyms of *mukta*. Attainment of liberation while one is still living and moving on the earth is called *jīvanmukti*. A person who has attained *mukti* in this very existence is called *jīvanmukta*, 'liberated while living'. Such a saint is freed from impurities that beset conditioned existence; he transcends the limitations of phenomenal life and is not reborn in *samsāra* after his death. Wearing his last body he performs his functions of body, mind and speech without being defiled by them.

The conception of *jīvanmukti* is found first in the early Buddhist and Jaina scriptures. Śākyamuni Buddha lived as a *jīvanmukta* from the time of his attainment of Enlightenment till he discarded his physical frame. Vardhamāna Mahāvīra also lived for many years as a *jīvanmukta* after attaining *kevalajñāna*. All the *arhats* known to Buddhist and Jaina traditions are believed to have achieved *jīvanmukti*. An old Pali text describes those perfected beings whose impurities have been destroyed, who are luminous, and who are emancipated in this very world (*khīṇāsavā jutimanto te loke parinibbutā*).¹ In another verse of the same work we find the following picture of an *arhat*; "His mind is quiescent, quiescent are his speech and deed; he has thus become a quiescent one when he has obtained liberation by right knowledge."²

The earlier Upaniṣads discuss the conception of *mokṣa* and describe the qualifications for realizing the *ātman*, the Self, or the *brahman*, the Divine Power, but they rarely present us with a picture of one who has realized *ātman* in this very life. The idea of a *jīvanmukta* appeared in the Brāhmanical texts after the *arhats* of the Śramanic tradition had eminently demonstrated the validity of the ideal of attaining release while one is living in the world. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, a text of post-Buddhist origin, refers to the

seers who are free from passion and are quiet, who are purified through renunciation and meditation, but states that they attain the Divine abodes (*brahmalokeṣu*) at the end of time (*parāntakāle*) and are liberated beyond death (*parāmṛtāḥ parimucyanti*).³

The *Bhagavadgītā*, however, seems to refer to a *jīvanmukta* when it describes a *muni* intent on *mokṣa*, who controls his senses, mind and intellect, who has eradicated desires, fear and anger, as ever released (*sadā mukta*).⁴

It is in the Mahāyāna Buddhist Sūtras and Śāstras, such as the *Aṣṭasāha-srikā-Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, the *Bodhisattvaabhūmi*, the *Mahā-yānasūtrālaṅkāra* and the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, etc., that one comes across a detailed treatment of the ideal of *jīvanmukti* practised by a *bodhisattva* and its ethico-philosophical justification.⁵

The *Muktikopaniṣed*, a text posterior to Rāmānuja, states that those who study and understand the meaning of 108 Upaniṣads become *jīvanmukta* and remain so till the destruction of their deeds already commenced. This text also distinguishes between *jīvanmukti* and *videhamukti* or deliverance after the dissolution of the body.⁶ Here one is reminded of the early Buddhist view of two stages of liberation, viz. *sopādisesa-nibbāna* or 'liberation with the body still remaining' and *anupādisesa-nibbāna* or 'liberation without the body remaining'.

According to the *Pārānandasūtra*, an early medieval Brahmanical Tantra, *jīvanmukti* means 'to have a vision of the Deity worshipped' (*svopāśya-darśanam jīvanmuktiḥ*).⁷ This, of course, is a definition offered from a particular cultic standpoint well known to the Tantras and the Purāṇas. In the *Śabdakalpadrūma* of Rādhākāntadeva, a *jīvanmukta* is defined as free from all bonds and established in God (*akhilabandharahito brahmaniṣṭhoḥ*).⁸

This, again, is a definition peculiar to a doctrine in which *mukti* consists in communion with God. According to the *Jīvanmuktiviveka*⁹ there are three means of obtaining *jīvanmukti*, viz. *tattvajñāna* or knowledge of the Truth, *manonāśa* or cessation of the activities of the mind, and *vāsanākṣaya* or destruction of instincts and habit-energies. All the sources tell us that the immediate gain of *jīvanmukti* is peace and joy.

IV. JĪVANMUKTI IN GURU TEGH BAHĀDUR'S BĀNĪ

The dominant theme of Guru Tegh Bahādur's compositions is spiritual liberation and way to it. The state of liberation is called *mukti*, *nirbāna padu* and *nirbhai padu*. The liberated being is called *mukat* and *giānī*. The Guru discusses the way to liberation (*mukati panth*) and describes the virtues and characteristics of a liberated person in detail.

The idea of God is at the centre of Guru Tegh Bahādur's soteriology. Although God is called Rām, Hari, Gobind, Prabh, Brahm, Murārī and Suāmī, He is not conceived anthropomorphically after the Purāṇic fashion. He who knows God as the one and only reality is a knower indeed, a *giānī*. Such a person practises constant mindfulness with regard to Lord God. This constant mindfulness of God's presence is called *nām-simran*. It is the way to liberation.

Guru Tegh Bahādur says that God is the master of joy (*bhugati*) and liberation (*mukati*). He is therefore the supreme object of human devotion. In the first stanza of his composition in *rāgu Gauḍī* he tells us that those who discern the truth (*tatu, tattva*) and seek the unconditioned (*nirbāna, nirvāṇa*) transcend pairs of opposites. They are even-minded towards both happiness and suffering, honour and insult, and they remain untouched by joy and grief.

The path of liberation consists of devotion to God; leaving pride, delusion and attachment to possessions one should give one's heart to singing the glory of God. He alone is delivered in whose heart dwells God. Since God is all pervasive and formless, we cannot conceive of His abode as a kind of heaven. And heaven (*surag, svarga*) is not the goal of a devotee in Sikhism. In the following lines Guru Tegh Bahādur describes the main characteristics of a liberated being:

"He who is free from greed (*lobh*), delusion (*moh*), attachment (*māiā*), egoity (*mamatā*) and slavery of sense-pleasures (*bikhian kī sevā*), and who is untouched by joy and grief, he is indeed an image of God; who considers heaven and hell, nectar and poison, gold and copper, praise and slander as equal (*sam*); he who is not bound by greed and delusion nor by suffering and happiness, know him to be an awakened one (*giānī*). Says Nānak, this

kind of person should be acknowledged as liberated.”¹⁰ A similar description of the sage (*muni*) of fixed understanding (*sthitaprajñā*) is found in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

“He whose mind is not agitated in sorrows, who has lost desire for pleasures and, whose longing, fear, and anger have departed, is called a sage of fixed understanding. He who has no desire for anything, feels neither delight nor aversion on encountering good or evil, his understanding is steady.”¹¹

Happiness and fearlessness are the characteristics of a perfect devotee. He alone is happy who sings the virtues of God; the other folk illuded by cosmic illusion (*māiā mohiā*) do not attain the Fearless Abode (*nirbhay padu*). The means of liberation (*upāu mukati*), according to Guru Tegh Bahādur, is devotion to God. One goes beyond the ocean of transmigration (*bhavasāgara*) by singing the praise of the Merciful (*karuṇāmai*).¹²

Spiritual liberation is figuratively called ‘extraction’ or ‘lifting up’ (*udhār, uddhāra*) even as bondage is likened to drowning into deep waters of repeated becoming (*bhaujalu, bhavasāgara*). God’s name alone lifts up the drowning devotee and takes him across the ocean of becoming.

The path to liberation (*mukati panthu*) is opposed to the path of gathering wealth. He who spends his life in amassing wealth incurs a twofold loss; he neglects his duty towards God, and prolongs his bondage. Since wealth is not an eternal possession, the efforts in gathering it are ultimately vain. Human life is rare and precious; therefore one should spend it in the quest of liberation. In a significant line, the Guru points out that singing God’s praise, service of the teacher, and acquisition of knowledge constitute the way to liberation.¹³

A remarkable description of one who is established in God, has realized his spiritual end, and who moves in the world but is above the world, is found in the eleventh stanza of the Guru’s composition in the measure *Sorāṭhi*. This hymn, which belongs to the finest pieces of ascetic poetry and sums up the classical conception of a *jīvanmukta*, deserves quotation *in extenso*. Our free translation of this hymn is as follows:

He who is not distressed by suffering;

From whom pleasure, love and fear have departed and
 who treats gold even as clay;
 Who is free from slander, praise, greed, delusion and pride;
 Who is not influenced by joy and grief nor by honour and
 insult;
 Who has renounced all hopes and intentions and remains
 free from worldly longing;
 Who is untouched by lust and wrath—
 the heart of such a person is the abode of the Holy.
 Through Teacher's blessing (*gur kirpā*) a man discerns this
 technique (*jugati*);
 Says Nānak, such a being is indeed merged into God like
 water into water.¹⁴

Almost a similar picture of a liberated one is given by the
 Guru in the third stanza of his composition in the measure
dhanāsari. Here the character of a true sage (*jogī, yogin*) is out-
 lined, and he is identified with a liberated being. Such a sage nei-
 ther indulges in slandering nor in eulogizing others, and he treats
 gold and iron alike. He has gone beyond joy and grief. He is called
 a sage (*jogī*), because he has firmly fixed his fickle mind which
 runs in ten directions. Such a being should be known as liber-
 ated.¹⁵

Traditional Brahmanical religious practices frequently come
 in for criticism in the religious writings of the Sikh Gurus. Guru
 Tegh Bahādur declares that going on pilgrimage to holy places
 (*tīrath*) and ceremonial fasting (*barat*) are of no avail in the ab-
 sence of Divine refuge. Likewise, asceticism and sacrificial ritu-
 als, performed by those persons who forget God's glory, become
 fruitless.

Ascetic practices become meaningful and rewarding only
 when they are accompanied by loving devotion to God. Thus the
 Guru says that he alone is a *jīvanmukta* who abandons both pride
 and delusion and celebrates the virtues of god. Ascetic practices
 include control of the mind and the senses as well as suppression
 of passions and desires. These ascetic practices form essential part
 of the Sikh religious culture. However, the Sikh Gurus' stress that
 these practices alone cannot lead one to liberation. Devotion to
 God is *sine qua non* for obtaining *mukti* in this life and in the life
 beyond. This belief in the efficacy of *bhakti* is indeed the hallmark

of medieval Indian theism. Guru Tegh Bahādur says that God has revealed this secret (*bhedu*) that in this dark age (*kal*, *kaliyuga*) liberation is obtainable only through devotion (*nām*).¹⁶ This view is upheld also by Tulasīdāsa who compares *nāma* with the desire-yielding tree (*kalpataru*) and says that it is the abode of weal and the only succour of beings in the *kali* age.¹⁷

Pride is the greatest folly of man; it is opposed to devotion which demands humility and utter self-surrender unto God. In his second hymn in the measure *Sārang*, Guru Tegh Bahādur states that one can attain liberation instantaneously (*mukati hohi chhin māhi*), when one gives up pride (*abhimānu*) and takes refuge with the quiescent ones (*santa*).

The word *santa* (it occurs in the Pali Canon numerous times) means quiescent, quiet, calmed or pacified. It is an epithet of a sage who has extinguished the fire of passions, who has quietened his boisterous senses, who has calmed his restless mind, and who has thus become a quiescent one. The Sanskrit form of the word *śānta*, 'peaceful' or 'quiescent', also connotes the same meaning as, for example, in Śāṅkarācārya's phrase *upaśānto ayam ātmā*, 'this self is quiescent', that is to say, the self is of the nature of peace. He who knows the self becomes quiescent like the self.

In the devotional literature of medieval India, especially in the writings of the Sikh Gurus, the word *santa* is a synonym of *sādha* or *sādhu*, which literally means a 'good one'. The implied meaning of *santa* and *sādha* in the devotional literature is a man who has found peace in devotion to God. As we have seen in the foregoing discussion of the way to liberation, one finds peace in devotion to God only when one has eradicated passions and extinguished desires. A *santa* of Guru Tegh Bahādur's conception is therefore the one who is at peace even in *saṁsāra*, who has stilled his thought and who is in harmony with the Divine scheme. It may be mentioned in passing that Sūradāsa has employed the word *harijana* in the sense of *santa*, understood theistically. The word *harijana* literally means 'God's men' or 'Divine beings'. Mahatma Gandhi's use of this word has a different meaning and should not be confused with that found in the *bhakti* literature.

Finally, we should review the conception of a *jīvanmukta* as

summed up by Guru Tegh Bahādur in his *salokas* preserved at the end of the Sikh Canon. Generally speaking, here the Guru repeats his views expressed in his other compositions. We shall first offer a free translation of the relevant verses and later comment on them.

He who is not contaminated by pleasure, pain, greed, delusion, and pride, says Nānak, such a person is an image of God (13).

He who neither praises nor slanders and treats gold and iron alike, says Nānak, know such a person to be released (14).

He who is free from joy and grief and considers enemy and friend alike, says Nānak, know such a person to be released (15).

He who does not frighten any one and is not frightened by others, says Nānak, acknowledge such a person to be wise (16).

He who has completely given up addiction to sense-objects (*bikhiā*) and assumed the garb of renunciation, says Nānak, consider such a person to be truly fortunate (17).

He who has shaken off illusion and egoity and has become wishless in all respects, says Nānak, in his heart dwells the Holy (18).

He who has abandoned egoism and recognized the creator God, says Nānak, acknowledge him to be truly released (19) ¹⁸

The foregoing translation may be supplemented by the following commentary. Renunciation has been the banner of Indian thought. Guru Tegh Bahādur lays particular emphasis on renunciation (*bairāg*, *vairāgya*, *virāga*, *virati*). This is obvious from his hymns in *Gauḍī*, *Sorathī* as well as the *salokas*. Again and again he asks the seeker of liberation to renounce greed, delusion, infatuation or attachment, conceit, egoity and the sense of ownership. Control of the mind and the senses is the heart of renunciation. One thing which is characteristic of the entire *bhakti* tradition and certainly of Sikh religious heritage is that renunciation must be accompanied by loving devotion to God. Renunciation is essential for attaining *jīvanmukti*; it is impossible to become a *jīvanmukta* without emptying the basket of individuality which is full of desires and passions. But mere renunciation is not a sufficient means of going beyond the whirlpool of *karma* and *saṁsāra*; intense love of God is certainly a more potent means of achieving *mukti*.

How shall we know that one who has unselfish and boundless love of God has attained *mukti*? One may love and adore God with all one's might and spirit and may eventually attain release

after death. Such a released one is not available to those who are in *sarīsāra*. Release or *mukti* becomes sociologically meaningful and relevant only when its fruits are shared with other fellow-beings. Here comes in the ideal of release here and now – the ideal of a *bodhisattva*, a saviour saint, a *jīvanmukta*. We can recognize such a being by his actions of body, mind and speech. He is an extraordinary being; his characteristics are not shared by those who are unfree and unenlightened.

Guru Tegh Bahādur clearly sets forth those characteristics that distinguish him who is released while alive. Such a person transcends the pairs of opposites having gone beyond the reach of those things that characterize the ordinary run of mankind. Thus he is impartial towards both friend and foe, regards gold and dust alike, desires neither ownership nor honour, knows that the phenomenal world is evanescent and ultimately unreal. Since he does not expect anything from anybody, having spent up all his desires and uprooted all passions, he is neither subject to nor a source of fear. He is an embodiment of friendliness and universal loving kindness. Such, in brief, is the nature of a *jīvanmukta*, an enlightened being, who has gone beyond conditions while still wearing his last physical frame. His presence in the world of beings is for the benefit of the latter. Having released himself, he works for the release of others (*āpan tarai avuran let udhār*).¹⁹

In conclusion, we want to comment on the meaning of the word *bikhiā* in *saloka* seventeen. We have translated it as ‘addiction to sense objects’. Almost all the earlier translators have mistook this word for *bikh* (Sanskrit *viṣa*), ‘poison’, and translated it as ‘the poison of worldliness’. Such a meaning is, in our opinion, improbable. The peculiar form *bikhiā* is due to the exigencies of metre as is clear from the line: *jih bikhiā sagalī tajī lio bhekh bairāg*. Our rendering, ‘he who has completely given addiction to sense-objects and assumed the garb of renunciation’ is based on the assumption that the word *bikhiā* is a contracted or shortened form of *bikhiā sakat* occurring in the sixth hymn in measure *Sorathī* of Guru Tegh Bahādur: *bikhiā sakat rahio nis bāsūr nah chhūṭi adhamāi*. We would like to translate this line as follows: “(you have) remained addicted to sense-objects day and night (and there-

fore, your) bondage has not been cutt off".²⁰ The word *adhamāi* literally means 'meanness' or 'sinfulness'; its religious meaning in this hymn is 'the state of bondage' (*bandhan*). Addiction to sense-objects or sensuality has prolonged bondage, says the Guru.

The nearest Sanskrit form of the word *bikhiā sakat* is *viṣayāsakti*, 'addition to sense-objects' or 'intense love of sense-pleasures.' Guru Tegh Bahādur stresses that *bikhiā* or *viṣayāsakti* should be discarded before one can attain release while alive. The addiction (*āsakti*) to sense-object (*viṣaya*) and pleasures derived from them runs counter to the love of God. He who wants spiritual release must first release himself from the prison-house of sensuality. Freedom from desires is the first mark of a *jīvanmukta*.

NOTES

1. *Dhammapada* (Nalanda edition, 1959), verse 89
2. *Ibid.*, verse 96
3. *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, III. 2.5-6
4. *Bhagavadgītā*, V. 28
5. See the text editions of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, ed. by P.L. Vaidyā, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No. 4, Darbhanga, 1960; English translation by Edward Conze in Bibliotheca Indica Series, Calcutta, the Asiatic Society, 1958; *Karunāpuṇḍarīka*, ed. by Isshi Yamada, London, University of London, 1968; *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, ed. by Nalinaksha Dutt, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series, Patna, K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1966; *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, ed. by S. Bagchi in Buddhist Sanskrit Texts Series, Darbhanga, 1970; *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, ed. by P.L. Vaidya, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No. 10, Darbhanga, 1960; English translation by Marion L. Matics, *Entering the Path of Enlightenment*, New York, Macmillan & Co., 1970
6. *Muktikopaniṣed*, pp. 659-62, in the *Upaniṣadsaṅgraha* (a collection of one hundred eighty-eight Upaniṣad texts), ed. by Jagdish Shastri, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass. 1970
7. *Pārānandasūtra*, ed. by Trivikram Tirtha, Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1931, p. 9
8. *Śabdakalpadrūma*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1961 (reprint), vol. II, p. 540
9. See P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, vol. V, pt. 2, Poona, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1962, p. 1604
10. *Guru Granth Sāhib*, Amritsar, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1969 (reprint), p. 219
11. *Bhagavadgītā*, II. 56-57

12. *Guru Granth Sāhib*, p. 220
13. *Ibid.*, p. 632
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 633-634
15. *Ibid.*, p. 684
16. *Ibid.*, p. 831
17. *Rāmacaritamānasa*, ed. by Vishvanath Prasad Misra, Varanasi, Kashiraja Edition, 1962, pp. 11-14
18. *Guru Granth Sāhib*, pp. 1426-27
19. *Ibid.*, p. 1427, *saloka* 22
20. *Ibid.*, p. 632, line 25

HOLY BHAKTAS

GURU-BĀNĪ AND BHAKTA-BĀNĪ A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS*

NIRBHAI SINGH

The present paper is an analytical attempt to discourse on text of the *Guru Granth (GG)*, the *textus receptus* of the Sikhs. The *Guru Granth* is accepted as a single text which was officially promulgated as the Canon. No deviation from it is possible because it has been apotheosized as *sabad-guru* in the Sikh tradition. We propose to analyze the text with a view to delving deep into its aesthetic form and articulating coherence among its philosophical concepts. We shall analyze the hymns of the Canon from certain essential epistemological, methodological and hermeneutical viewpoints. Without these modern techniques of understanding our interpretations of the sacred scriptures are bound to flounder.

The Scripture contains hymns of six Sikh Gurus (viz., Guru Nānak, Guru Aṅgad Dev, Guru Amar Dās, Guru Rām Dās, Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahādur), Muslim saints (viz., Farīd, Bhīkhan, Mardānā, Sadnā, Sattā and Balwaṇḍ), Maharashtrian saints (viz., Nāmdev, Parmānand, Trilocan), Rāmānand and his disciples (viz., Kabīr, Ravidās, Pīpā, Sain and Dhannā), Bābā Sundar, Jaidev, Benī, Sūrdās, and Bhaṭṭas (bards). It is believed in the Sikh tradition that Guru Nānak (AD 1469-1539), the progenitor of Sikh faith, initiated the process of preparation of the Canon and Guru Amar Dās (AD 1479-1574), the third Guru, got the hymns of the earlier Gurus, Bhaktas and Sufis collected in manuscript form in different breviaries called "Goindwāl Wālīān Pothīān" or "Mohanjī Dīān Pothīān" (c. AD 1552-1574). The third Guru set in these sacred repertoires (*pothīs*) the format of the text which was

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implicit carried over by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru. The latter affixed seal of authenticity on the hymns of other contributors in AD 1604 and preserved them in one standardized volume for the ages to come. There is no possibility of variance in the textual readings of the Canon because the Gurus' dexterous and methodical skill or 'form critical analysis' settled the texts. It makes our job much easier. The hymns of the Scripture, perhaps, present phenomenological characteristics of identical mystical experiences of their contributors.

Their ontic 'common core' of immediate mystical experiences is expressed through diversity of linguistic expressions couched in regional dialects, myths, metaphors, symbols and other folk genres. All the hymns incorporated in the Canon represent cross-cultural phenomenological accounts of mystical experience. They are representatives of Maharashtrian, U.P., Rajasthani, and other folk cultural traditions which have close underlying affinity with Punjab's folk tradition and culture. All these hymns (*sabads*) are coherent with the philosophical structure of the Sikh Canon. There might be outward discordances and seeming inconsistencies, but the underlying ontic identity seems to be the sole reason for their inclusion in the Canon. This is the central issue of this paper.

It would be pertinent to make mention here that my researches on poetic compositions of *Bhaktas*, Sufis and other saints reveal that prior to transcription of "Mohanji Dīān Pothīān" or *Guru Granth* no autographic manuscript by any *bhakta* is available. Devotional utterances of the *bhaktas* were recited by folk musicians or bards (i.e. *bhaṭṭas/cārāns*). These folk songs remained in oral tradition but later on these were recorded in manuscript forms by the devotees. The earliest manuscript of Fatehpur in Devanagari characters (*pāṇḍulipī*) is of "The Padas of Sūrdās"¹ which records AD 1582 in its colophon. All the manuscripts are found in variant recensions. It requires a long discussion to explain the causes of their variant readings and the processes of emending their divergent versions for finding out the most suitable words to prepare a critical version of the manuscript. We find that *Bhakta-bāṇī* in the *Guru Granth* has uniform recensions but other hymns (*padas*) of

these *bhaktas* outside the Sikh Canon have different versions. It requires more space for detailed discussion which is not possible in this paper.²

I can well understand that the contents and forms of the *sant-bāṇī*, as available in different recensions in other regions, were got accidentally or deliberately modified but it is evidently clear from the study of different manuscripts that archetypal elements of the hymns remain constant at deep structural level though at the surface these variations are determined by cultural and anthropological and other factors. Hence we can say that variant recensions have mostly underlying identical meanings unless the meanings are intentionally changed. This issue is irrelevant for this paper because we have accepted Sikh Canon as a standardized version. We shall not discuss variant recensions of *Bhakta-bāṇī* which are found in manuscript form in Maharashtra, Varanasi, Rajasthan and other parts of India. The text of the *Guru Granth* is, thus, an ideal or exemplary Scripture which reiterates doctrinal identity between *Guru-bāṇī* and *Bhakta-bāṇī*.

Every hymn of a *Bhakta* is an exemplar in the semiotic process. It also concretizes the essence of the *universalia in re*. It is an example or expressive of certain generality. Semiotics or symbolism is a domain of general meaning which transcends the contextual meaning. Hence symbolism transcends the signifier. The theory of communication makes a distinction between signification and symbolization. It is based on Paul Ricoeur's modern hermeneutical principles.³ Signification contextualizes meanings within the structure of a culture. On the contrary, symbolization is a process of decontextualization which tends to transcend the cultural milieu. In other words, it is a movement within the process of communication itself that transcends cultural contextuality and retrieves original ontic meanings. Thus, signification and symbolization are two levels of semiotic process. The theory of symbolic transcendence transports us to the transcendental realm where signs and symbols are mediatory between the phenomenal and the noumenal realms, respectively. Hence level of signification is an expression of contextualization of meanings and level of symbolization is a decontextualization of meanings. Both combined together are help-

ful to carry over the interpretive procedure to retrieve pristine meanings of the revealed text. Both are complementary techniques of understanding a text. These modern hermeneutical principles are useful for restoring original meanings of the text. Hence, modern hermeneutics shall be used as an epistemological technique of interpretation of *Guru-bāṇī* and *Bhakta-bāṇī*.

II

Now we get down to brass tacks of the present paper. We propose to raise certain philosophical questions. Do the hymns of the *Bhaktas* perfectly cohere with the metaphysical structure of the Sikh Canon? Do they constitute integral units of the whole Sacred hymnology? Do all the contributors of the Scripture have *alike* mystical experiences? Do they have doctrinal identity from the standpoint of ontic nature of Reality? Do they accept reality of the individual self? What is the ontological status of the temporal world? Are the societal phenomena necessary metaphysical corollaries of the supreme dynamic Reality? These are fundamental issues which I propose to discuss in detail. I would try to argue that all these philosophical problems constitute phenomenology of the text of the Canon. It ascertains that these concepts are common or identical in *Guru-bāṇī* and *Bhakta-bāṇī*. It requires a comparative analysis to cull out their underlying metaphysical identities.

The above discussion takes us to a logical conclusion that all the hymns included in the Canon are its integral units and they cohere with its overall structure as well. Since these hymns were got incorporated in the Scripture under the personal supervision of the third and the fifth Gurus, so there remains the least chance of errors. In order to find their coherence and harmony with the whole structure of the sacred hymnology, it is necessary to interpret every hymn on the yardstick of the *mūlmantra* (creedal tenet) of Guru Nanak that occurs in the beginning of the Scripture. It seems to provide metaphysical structure of the Canon. Hence the hymns (*ipse dixits*) of *Bhaktas* incorporated in the Canon are integral units and they perfectly correspond with the whole Scripture. Whenever, there is a possibility of digression or discordance in the interpretation of hymns of a *Bhakta* or Farid, Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjan Dev have added their interpretive hymns in addition to the

incorporated hymns of the saints to clarify the underlying philosophical ideas. I have discovered that the *Bhaktas*' and some of Farid's hymns which are included in the *Guru Granth* are found in variant recensions in Rajasthan, U.P. (Varanasi), Maharashtra and other regions of the land. So much so that *Sarvāṅgi* canonized by Dādu Dayāl's disciple of *Dādupanthi* tradition has different versions from the Sikh Canon. I, therefore, propose to discuss certain concepts which are identical or alike both in *Guru-bānī* and *Bhakta-bānī*.

III

The above discussion makes our job easier. We can apply comparative phenomenological techniques to discover affinity between *Guru-bānī* and *Bhakta-bānī* on the basis of an authenticated version of the *Guru Granth*. In the Indian context philosophy is called *darśan*. Philosophy is generally considered to be a rigorously reasoned out intellectual analysis which tries to resolve some perennial problems related to the nature of supreme Reality, experience of the Ineffable, and so on. There are certain problems which cannot be solved with discursive reasoning. Then we have to take resort to a higher human faculty of mystic experience which resolves all contradictions. It is an experience which transcends the dichotomy of subject and object. And the term *darśan* is derived from the Sanskrit root *dr̥ṣ*, to see. Literally it means perception or vision. But its profound and philosophical connotation goes beyond empirical experiences derived from cognitive sense organs (*giān indris*). Mystic experience is generally thought to be transcending the limitations of empirical experience. In the *Guru-bānī* and *Bhakta-bānī* the term *darśan* seems to have been used in a qualified sense. Here mystic experience encompasses transcendental reality without snapping its contact with the empirical reality. It is, thus, a transmuted experience of the phenomenal world. It is a self-luminous experience wherein empirical experience is qualitatively transmuted (*gharīai*). Energy (*śakti*) is potentially consciousness. Spiritual progress means to develop consciousness within energy. Entrapment of the self in the material world is to be got rid of for its upward spiritual ascent culminating in unmediated mystic experience.

We find that in the "Japuji" of Guru Nānak's *suruti* (consciousness) at the lowest level is sheer energy. It is further transmuted through *sabad* into *mati* (intellect), *man* (reflection), and *buddhi* (intelligence); and *buddhi* at the apex is transmuted into *sudhi* (self-luminous consciousness). It is an absorptive mystic experience where self is simultaneously at one with Eternity and temporality. The realized self (*gurmukh* or *bhakta* or *sant*) experiences mystic identity with the supreme Being, and, thus, has a vision (*darśan*) of the Real.

Another philosophical shade of the term *darśan* is a rational justification of mystic experience. It is a means for articulating a rational metaphysical system. Therefore *darśan* may be a systematic rational explanation of mystic experience. Reason in the *Guru Granth* deals with the laws which govern human mind in its upward spiritual ascent from the phenomenal to the noumenal. Reason is itself a ladder for upward ascent towards goal of the transcendent. Revelation is the apex of reason. Hence reason and revelation are essentially complementary to each other. It is in this sense the mystical philosophy (*sahaj darśan*) of the *Guru Granth* has been interpreted. This interpretation of the term *darśan* in Gadamerian sense of 'two horizons'⁵ is almost equivalent to the modern philosophical enquiry of gnostic literature in the Western tradition.

In the emergence and development of the mystical movement of Bhakti cult reason played a significant role. It helped in articulation of the existential mystical experiences of the *Bhaktas* and the *Gurus* who do not depend upon any post-mystical reports of other mystics of Vedic or Buddhist or Sufic tradition. It is heartening to note that *Guru-bāṇī* and *Bhakta-bāṇī* arrived at identical concepts of mystical experience, which reconciles theistic and monoistic, personal and impersonal, mediated and unmediated types. It may be made clear that all contributors of the Canon were mystics whose post-mystical reports, i.e. hymns are the outcome of their experiences of the primordial Reality. Guru Nanak says: as reality is revealed to him, he communicates it to others (i.e. *Jaisī mai āvai khasam kī bāṇī taisarā karī giān ve lālo*, GG, p. 722). *Khasam* (master) for the *Gurus* is symbolic of primordial source

and *bānī* is a symbol of revealed word which has been recorded in the Scripture. Similarly hymns of *Bhaktas* are revealed words. Such mystical statements are spread over in the Canon.

We have a philosophical problem whether mystical experience is intelligible? The term intelligible is further split up into theoretical or existential understanding. Theoretical understanding is discursive reasoning. If it is just hairsplitting, the mystic experience is unintelligible. Second category of existential understanding has been commended in the Scripture because it is based on mystic experience itself. We therefore infer that it is not possible to have an adequate theoretical understanding without existential understanding. In the Scripture we have many instances to support this point. Guru Nanak says: "It is difficult to express experiences of that transcendent realm" (i.e. *nānak kathanā karārā sāru* (37), GG, p.8). Kabir reiterates same idea in his 'Bāvan Akhari'. He says: If I realize Allah, then what should I say about Him. If I express of Allah, then it cannot be benefited by anyone (i.e. *allāh lahai tau kiā kahau kahu ta ko upakār* (3), GG, p. 340).

As such, we come across such epistemological states in the Scripture. There are negative mystical statements which refer to man's limitations of expressing the invisible transcendent reality through words. The negative statements are ineffable (*akath*), unspeakable (*abol*), suprasensuous (*agocar*) and so on. These statements simply imply limitations of theoretical understanding of the Numinous. However, it is not totally inexpressible or unspeakable. It requires decontextualization of the phenomenal realm of signification. Decontextualization is carried over through *sabad-yoga* as a performative continuous non-assimilative dialectical process culminating in mystical experience. It is a realm of symbolism which transcends all cultural limitations of the phenomenal world. To a realized self these symbols reflect an underlying ontic reality. It is the highest state of development of consciousness where he is simultaneously experiencing the Eternal and the temporal.

Now we may bring our point into still sharper focus by raising another philosophical query. All the statements treasured in the Canon are post-mystical experiential accounts. Do these accounts or reports transcend cultural milieu? Our answer would be

in the affirmative provided these are decontextualized. If these are not decontextualized, then mystics' reports about their experience are culturally bound. They use religious language to express their experiences of the Numinous. For example, *biṭhala*, *bañjārā*, *ṭhākar* are signifiers of warrior, trader, master respectively in the folk cultures of Maharashtra and Rajasthan. But when these are to be interpreted from mystical standpoint, then these signifiers become symbols of ontic reality. Therefore interpretation is to be done from two standpoints.

We can safely say that mystic experience cuts across cultural contours. No doubt the language used by the mystics to express their experiences is culturally bound, yet symbols decontextualized the phenomenal realm. With this process of decontextualization, there is a possibility of cultural and philosophical ecumenism, i.e. underneath all differences there is one identical ontic core or truth. This is a sort of essentialists' reductionism; reducing all mystical reports of *Gurus* and *Bhaktas* to one essence. And the signification process provides various cross-cultural phenomenological accounts of mystical experiences.

IV

We have shown above that mystical experience in the *Guru Granth* is a blend of personal and impersonal, temporal and eternal, profane and sacred and so on. There is an intelligible distinction between non-absorptive and absorptive types of mystical experiences. In the former the mystic does not identify himself with the supreme Deity. The latter involves a complete identity with the Real. In this type of unitive immediate type of experience the mystic transcends all distinctions or dichotomies between the self and the supreme Reality. This kind of paradigm we come across in the Sikh Scripture. Here self completely annihilates its independent and distinctive existence of the individual self (egoity or *haumai*) and, thereafter, realizes his all-comprehensive ontic numerical identity with the supreme impersonal Unity.

W.T. Stace⁶, Ninian Smart⁷, R.C. Zaehner⁸ *et al.* are of the view that mystical reports of the mystics have no empirical content in their experiences of the Numinous. Since it transcends empirical experience, so mystical experience has a 'universal core',

common to all types of mystical experiences. Steven T. Katz⁹ goes to the other extreme of asserting that mystical experiences of different religions of the world over are essentially different. He, thus, elucidates his standpoint with examples of mystical experiences from different religious traditions; namely, Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Christianity, Sufism, Judaism, and Hinduism. But, on the contrary, we find that in the Sikh Canon empirical contents are neither negated nor transcended; rather these are transmuted and assimilated within the all-inclusive unity. It is a phenomenological characteristic of mystical experience which has common ontic core. It takes us to a conclusion that mystical experiences of *Gurus* and *Bhaktas* have an essential *likeness* despite their cultural and linguistic diversities.

V

We find that hymns of *Gurus* and *Bhaktas* in the Sikh Canon do not do away with reason, emotions, and other empirical aspects of the self. These are considered as integral and inseparable aspects of the self. So much so that the transformed empirical aspects constitute the very core of their mystic experiences. It is certainly not an anoetic immediate experience. Guru Nanak's concept of *khaṇḍ*s in the "*Japuji*" justifies that mystic experience consists of transmuted emotions, reason, and so on. For example, *giān*, and *saram khaṇḍ*s (phases) are cognitive and aesthetic dimensions of the self. Both express two phases of spiritual ascent of the self. It is a simultaneous and continuous progression which emancipates the self from the causal necessity of emotionality and Nature (*qudrat*). It is a process of spiritual development of the empirical self (*jīva*) into a spiritual self (*ātman*). It is not process of self-transcendence or annihilation of the empirical self. Rather it is a simultaneous non-assimilative dialectical ascent. It is a twofold development from within and without. The inner development implies continuous process of eradication of egoity (*haumai*) and other evil propensities of the self. It culminates in identification of the self with the Real. And outwardly the self identifies itself with everything of the world. The self visualizes every element (sentient or non-sentient) as manifest units of the supreme Being. The seeker, therefore, identifies himself with every sentient or non-sentient unit.

This is how the self realizes relative reality of the manifest phenomenal world. Enticement of the self into the material world is to be got rid of. Thus it is that the spiritual ascent achieves its goal and culminates in mystic unity with the Real or *IK*. The self enters the realm of freedom. In the cognitive realm (*giān khaṇḍ*) rational aspect dominates (*parcaṇḍu*) but the essence of it is dynamic (*karma*). And in the *saram khaṇḍ* intuitive experience discerns beauty or form (*rūp*) of the Invisible through transparency of the manifest Nature. The Self transforms (*gharīai*) itself in such a way as enables it to intuit the incomprehensible metacosmic and cosmic forms (viz., *tithai ghārit gharai bahut anūp*/GG, p.7). The self articulates many deities which are theophanic embodiments of beauty (viz., *rūp raṅg ke ves*/ GG, p.7). It is, thus, the self realizes cosmic beauty with mystic vision (*darśan*). Hence both reason and experience are complementary aspects of the self for having mystic experience. Nevertheless, metacosmic experience resuscitates within the self an awareness of the ontic unity of the *IK* (lit.one).

Cognition and empirical experiences are valid sources of knowledge. *Gurus* and *Bhaktas* sought to know the Real and came up with almost identical viewpoints about its ontic nature. Although they are primarily mystics and spiritual in their quest, yet they have interpreted their mystic experiences of the Real in religious language of the common folks. Their panegyrics or devotional songs are lyrical post-experiential reports of their mystic experiences through common signifiers and symbols. Their language is called *Sādh* or *Sadhūkarī bhāshā* which treasures mystical ideas of the *gurus* and the *sants*.

The Canon puts forth an idealistic metaphysical system in which spirit (consciousness) is reality and matter is to be spiritualized. *Ātman* (spiritual element) and *deh* (body as material element) are two inseparable dimensions of a single cosmic spiritual continuum. It has continuity and immanence in varying degrees of hierarchy in every element from microcosm (*piṇḍ*) to the macrocosm (*brahmaṇḍ*). Being is eternal consciousness (*akālpurakh* or *brahman*) which is formless or limitless (*nirāṅkār* or *ananta*). Thus, the Canon has an idealistic system with the characteristics of dynamism, non-dualism and social involvement. The non-dual char-

acteristic of the *IK* encompasses the aspects of transcendence and immanence, one and many, impersonal and personal. The dynamic aspect tries to strike a reconciliation between spiritual and secular, permanent and transitory, and eternal and temporal. Social involvement is a metaphysical necessity to reaffirm the reality of historicity of human action and the relative reality of the phenomenal world.

Gurus and *Bhaktas* of the Sikh Canon were, of course, confronted with some philosophical issues. They tried to resolve them with an emphasis on existential social involvement for the benefit of mankind. This is, perhaps, one of the foremost objectives of religion. In the earlier philosophical systems social life was practically minimized. *Gurus* and *Bhaktas*, on the contrary, laid more emphasis on societal relations and other aspects of social realities. It was their singular contribution to restore historical reality of time (*kāla*) and historicity of human action (*karma*).

In the modern religious language the dynamic metaphysical structure of the Scripture could be put in terms of personal and impersonal unities. With this dynamic metaphysical system the crisis emerging from the conflicting philosophical systems of Hinduism and Islamic mystical movement of Sufism could be resolved. In Hinduism both impersonal (*nirguṇa*) and personal (*saguṇa*) strands of reality were prevalent as *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* schools of Bhakti cult. Islam (Sufism) lays more emphasis on personal unity of Allah (*tauḥīd*) but suppresses the impersonal aspect. All the contributors of the Sikh Canon try to reconcile impersonal and personal aspects of the *IK* without suppressing either one. Guru Nanak asserts that a realized self (*gurmukh*) seeks to have an absorptive mystical experience. With a divine vision *gurmukh* absorbs (*samāvai*) the manifest (*akāru*) into the unmanifest (*nirāṅkār*) in such an 'artless art' (*aqal kalā*) as it would harmonize both impersonal and personal aspects in the all-inclusive Being (viz., *nirāṅkār mahi akāru samāvai aqal kalā saca saci tikāvai*-GG, p. 414). Similarly, *Bhaktas* lay emphasis on attributes of personal unity as their *modus operandi*, but they also give equal and balanced importance to the impersonal primordial source of reality which manifests in the multiplicity of the external world.

Again, the *mūlmantra*¹¹ which occurs in the beginning of the

Canon enunciates the unity of personal Deity and the underlying impersonal unity. Although the *mūlmantra* refers to personal unity of the Deity by the use of signifying terms (viz., *purakh*, *kartā*, *nirbhau* or *nirvair*), yet we also find in it the symbols of impersonal unity. For example, *ik*, *sat*, *akāl*, *ajūni* and *saibhaṅg*.

The signifier *Ōṅkār* preceded by the symbol of numericality clearly synthesizes the personal and impersonal aspects of the all-comprehensive unitive Reality. All the functional names (*kirtam nām*) used in the Scripture are signifiers of attributes of personal unity. Guru Arjan Dev proclaims that all these names have their primordial source in the impersonal unity (GG, p. 1083). Here we come across a unique phenomenological fact that both the mediated and the unmediated mystical experiences of personal and impersonal unities respectively are harmoniously synthesized with the *Ik*.

Synthesis of personal and impersonal unities was an existential problem for the *Gurus* and the *Bhaktas*. It was due to intercultural contextual hermeneutical problematics and the difficulty for them was to explain the Sematic concept of 'otherness' (*ghairiat*) of other created things. Their dynamic metaphysical system's encompasses on 'otherness' of the created elements within its all-comprehensive structure of the non-dual Being *Kartā purakh* (eternal consciousness) is a teleological principle which creates its manifest forms out of itself and within itself. In the static metaphysical systems of Plato, Kant, Bradley and Śaṅkara the created elements are treated as copies (shadows), phenomena, appearances and *māyā* respectively. The dynamic aspect is symbolized with cyclic process of expansion (*pasārā*) and contraction (*samoīā*). It is an expression of the dynamic and purposive principle, *hukam*.

One of the most significant aspect of the dynamic metaphysical system is that it lays stress on the real historical dimension of development of consciousness, knowledge, social ideals and growth of history of mankind. The negation of the empirical self (ego) and the world in the metaphysical systems of the then prevalent Sufism and Vadanta resulted in asceticism, renunciation and escapism from the social relations of life. It gave rise to pessimistic and sceptical attitude towards the mundane world. The crux of such ascetic

schools of thought is self-transcendence and withdrawal from the socio-political responsibilities of the world. They suffer from serious existential contradictions for evading stark realities of the phenomenal world.

Gurus and *Bhaktas*, on the other hand, advocate a dynamic view of life in which struggle lies at the very core in order to resolve the existential conflicts while living in the world. They plead for simultaneous renunciation (*saṅnyāsa*) from within and social involvement and commitment from without. It is a development of the self through non-assimilative, dialectically ascending labyrinth order. The Canon, thus, reaffirms relative realities of the empirical self and the phenomenal world. Both are treated as manifest elements of the real One.

The dynamic nature of reality implies that time (*kāla*) is real and an inseparable dimension of the Real. It is an ordering principle of the cosmic and the metacosmic processes. To be in time and be in the Eternal (*akāla*) at the same time is to realize one's ontic numerical identity with the spiritual continuum of Being. It may be made clear that in this conflict of time it is the mystical time which is realized in ecstatic mystic experience. It is to be realized as an 'eternal present' wherein past, present and future are intuitively realized as a continuous duration. Mystical time is purely a temporal process and the very stuff of dynamic reality. The self through supra-sonoral echoes (*anahad nāda*) realizes the Eternal cosmic harmony.

With the restoration of historical reality of time, the *Gurus* and the *Bhaktas* reaffirm reality of historical action. This is, perhaps, the singular original contribution which was initiated by the *Bhaktas* and was consummated by the *Gurus* in the course of human history of medieval India ranging from the 12th century to the 18th century. It restored historicity of this-world and condemned the concept of other-worldliness. Guru Nanak's "Japu" also reiterates this standpoint. *Karma* has principal supremacy over cognition (*giān*) and affection (*saram*) (GG, p.9). It is only action which determines one's 'station in life'.

The attributes of the personal Deity of the Scripture are dynamic aspects of the non-dual primordial reality (*satnām*). These

attributes reflect social involvement as well. The attributes constitute cornerstone of *bhakti* for realization of the supreme Reality. In the *bhakti-yoga* the dichotomy between the devotee (*bhakta*) and the object of worship (*iṣṭadeva*) continues till the self existentially identifies itself with the *Ik*. In the hymns of the *Gurus* and the *Bhaktas*, relationship between the personal Deity and the devotee is symbolically expressed through lover-beloved, husband-wife, friend-friend, master-servant and so on. These binary oppositions are transcended in the immediate or absorptive mystic experience. All these binary oppositions are phenomenal or attributive names which are used to realize mystic identity.

We can also infer dynamic character of the Real from the attributes of the Deity. *Bhaktas* revived the ancient material culture of the Vedic age. It was spiritualized by elevating tribal heroes as symbolic of the supreme personal Deity. *Viṭṭhala*, for example, the tribal hero in Maharashtrian folk tradition is deified as supreme Deity. Again *nāik* in the folk culture in the Northern region is a hero or master of the traders (*bañjārā*) tribe. Similarly *ṭhākar* (lit. master) a hero in the Rajput tribes is signifier of active involvement in social relations and struggle of life. Such attributes are picked up from medieval folk culture of India. These are mythical and metaphysical expressions of the common folk traditions in medieval India. These are used as means for spiritual progression of the self. Some other folk heroes were raised to the status of incarnates of Vishnu too. *Viṭṭhala*, *ṭhākar*, *nāik et al.* tribal heroes became epithets of Krishna. Again, the epithet of trickster (*bājīgar*) as a folk character signifies personal Deity. It has been frequently used by the *Gurus* and the *Bhaktas*. All this is a process of decontextualization of signification of culturally conditioned characters.

In the hymns of *Bhaktas* and *Gurus* such attributes are picked up both from Krishna cult (viz., *hari*, *mādhav*, *gobind*, *mukand*, *nārāin*, *gosāin* and so on) and Rāma bhakti (viz., *rāma*, *raghunātha*, etc.)

Their overall emphasis seems to be on *saguna bhakti* with an ontic grounding of impersonal non-dual unity. Both Rama and Krishna are tribal heroes. They signify dynamic view of life in the

context of tribal culture. When they are decontextualized, they become symbols of the supreme impersonal Unity.

Man in a state of nescience continues to take the transitory or ephemeral life and the world as ultimate realities. These should be taken as nonspatial manifest elements of the limitless (*añantā*). Discriminative knowledge (*bibek giān*) is necessary to realize that the empirical life and the world are simply manifestations of the transcendent Being. According to the Scripture all actions including *bhakti* are means to gain gnosis of the Transcendent. As Ravidās says *giānai kārān karam abhiāsu giānu bhayā to karmahi nāsu* (GG, p. 1167). Besides, we are under the malignant influence of five evil propensities (viz., *kām, karodh, lob, moh, hañkā*). All these are manifestations of egoity (*haumai*) which need to be got rid of. When egoity is eradicated, the opacity of the phenomenal world is transformed into transparency of the transcendent Being.

All the obstacles disappear when knowledge dawns with *guru's* grace. The Scripture enjoins upon the seeker of Truth to be in a holy assembly (*saṅgat*) of saintly persons. Without *saṅgat* the devotee cannot develop love (*prem*) for the Numinous. Hence *saṅgat* is an epistemological necessity for Truth-realization. *Saṅgat* is a socio-spiritual unity that reflects the supreme Real.

Bhaktas and *Gurus* mainly lay stress on man's existential situation in the world and in the society. Their basis is a non-dual metaphysical structure but main emphasis is on man's existential problems. Man is not only a thinking subject but he is also an agent of action as a centre of feeling and willing. He is intrinsically a free agent but his actions are constrained due to certain evil factors of *māyā*, ignorance, egoity and other sensuous aspects of the empirical self. These are concerned with inner life of man. They are also concerned with man's existential situation in a society where caste system has encroached upon his free will. It is for this reason we find vehement criticism of caste system which was prevalent in the medieval Indian society. Hence from the existentialist standpoint man's total being in the world is taken into consideration.

As a moral agent man realizes his pristine ontic freedom while keeping himself involved with others in society. Ideal man has

complete control over his basal elements. In the Kantian sense he also recognizes freedom of other persons in the society. Society of such persons is a concrete unity.

The realized person qualitatively transforms from within and transcends his finite nature. He seems to have a dual victory over the ceaseless flow of real time in the course of history. The free man transcends time and is simultaneously living through societal relations in historical time. He casts off egoity and identifies his interests with the interests of mankind. He is, thus, a manifest micro-unity of the socio-spiritual unity. All contributors of the Canon visualize a social structure consisting of the realized selves who are strung by internal societal relation of mutual love. The realized self is an agent of the supreme Being. He surrenders his individual will and is completely controlled by the Divine Will which is innately inherited by him (viz., *hukam razāi calanā nānak likhiā nāl* / GG, p.2). It is a categorical imperative which is *a priori* fount of his free moral actions.

Dynamic view of life presupposes overcoming the fear of death in the existential situations. We are faced with a problem as how do *Bhaktas* and *Gurus* reconcile their pronounced non-dual ontology with social realities of life. Earlier ascetic traditions regarded social realities in the labyrinth way of self-realization and historical human action was for them of no real merit. With a view to transcending social inequalities, historicity of categorical human action in time was now reaffirmed. Thus, categorical imperative or disinterested action is pivotal both in *Bhakta-bānī* and *Guru-bānī*. For a man to transcend his frailties and weaknesses in the existential situations he needs company of saints (*sādh saṅgat*). It helps him to control (*nigrah*) his inner self and makes him an ideal member of the society.

Both *Bhākta-bānī* and *Guru-bānī* try to reconcile spiritual and material outlooks of life. Both strands advocate that spiritual living and worldly life are inseparable. The Scripture advocates that in existential situations worldly life is to be controlled by spiritual values without annihilating or suppressing either one. The spiritual is to act as a guarantor for the temporal. The practice of cementing social relations is spiritual love (*prem*) which forges so-

cial harmony. The loving devotion for one's deity is manifested also in the social relationship. The term *bhakti* is derived from the Sanskrit root *bhaj* which means 'to share'. The sharing of the divine name is extended to social life. It is the fountainhead of social equality. The divine *nām* was democratized. The underlying idea of *nām-simran* was to show man the way out of bondage (slavery) of the material world, and restore human autonomy. It has been shared by all irrespective of artificial social stratification. Prior to the *Bhaktas* and the *Gurus*, it was a monopoly of the priestly class and Brahmins. Being realized selves the *Bhaktas* (Nāmdēv, Kabīr, Ravidās, Sain and others) do not feel inferiority complex in calling themselves calico-printer (*chimpā/chimbā*), weaver (*julāhā*), cobbler (*camār*), barber (*nāī*) respectively. For them caste has no salience. In their opinion professional skill is a matter of pride, self-respect and dignity. To live an honest life in society is the essence of human dignity.

Bhaktas, thus, deem themselves as free moral agents and are founts of disinterested actions with an altruistic outlook towards others (viz., *āpu, tāri tāre kul doi*/GG, p 858). Similarly, Guru Nānak inspires for collective salvation of mankind. He says those who have practised the divine *nām* are enlightened ones and they have emancipated others as well (viz., *jini nāmu dhiāiā gae masakat ghāli nānak te mukh ujale keti chuṭi nāli*/ GG, p.8). The realized persons transcend all caste discriminations and social barriers. They are equal in all respects. They are brothers (*bhāī*) and friends (*mitu*).

Like Plato's 'Republic' and M.K. Gandhi's "Rām Rāj", Ravidās also envisaged a 'utopia' : griefless city (*begampurā*). In his ideal social structure, there would be no pain and grief, no worry of tax and revenue, no fear of punishment for mistake and decline of age. He has attained that state of realization (*vatan*) where goodness (*khair*) always predominates. There the rule of divine kingdom (*pātsāhi*) continues for ever. In this miniature social structure there would be no second-rate and third-rate citizen. All would be equally enjoying self-dignity and freedom (GG, p. 345). Similarly casteless and classless social idea was also visualized by the *Gurus*.

Guru Gobind Singh transformed the social ideal of the holy

assembly (*saṅgat*) of the *Guru Granth* into a concrete socio-spiritual unity of the *Khālsā*. The *Khālsā* brotherhood is based on the principle of divine love (*prem*). The *Khālsā* is a realized free moral agent of *Akāl purakh*. He is a knight of the *Akāl purakh*. He discharges all actions in consonance with the Divine Will (*hukam*). Guru Gobind Singh sums up the central message of his teachings as under:

Listen all, the truth whereby I proclaim.
 Only those practising loving devotion to humanity
 Shall attain the lord (*prabh*).
 (*sāc kahon sun lehu sabhai*.
jīn prem kio tin hī praph pāio) (29)
Shabadārath Dasam Granth

Bhaktas and *Gurus* socialize the Divine Will. In the social structure of the *Khālsā-panth* and the *begampurā* spiritualized democratic will is the basis of societal relations. Individual will and general will both are subordinated to Divine Will. Divine Will functions through man's will as His agent. Democratization of the Divine Will is a check on theocratic and political despotic wills. *Bhaktas* and *Gurus* democratized ontology of man and divinity by treating both as interchangeable spiritual elements.

On the basis of the above philosophical analysis we can safely conclude that Sikh Scripture is one organic whole, a repertoire of hymns of its contributors. The philosophical concepts involved in the hymns have underlying ontological identity though outward expressions show cultural diversity

NOTES

1. Bahura, Gopal Narayan & Ken Bryant (eds.), *The Padas of Sūrdās* (Jaipur, 1982).
2. For more details are Nirbhai Singh, *Bhagata Nāmadeva in the Guru Grantha* (Patiala, 1981). chap. V.
3. For detailed study of distinction between signification and symbolism as a theory of communication consult R. Sundara Rajan, *Towards a Critique of Cultural Reason* (Delhi, 1989).
4. Dadu Dayal (AD 1544-1603) was a Rajasthani saint who got compiled hymns of medieval saints in an anthology which is known as *Sarvāṅgi*. He was contemporary of Guru Arjan Dev, the 5th Guru of the Sikhs.

5. See also Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Exeter, 1980). chap. II & sec. 42 (pp. 300-56).
6. W.T. Stace's classical works are *The Teachings of the Mystics* (New York, 1960); and *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London, 1961).
7. Ninian Smart's significant works on mysticism are *Reasons and Faiths* (London, 1958); *The Philosophy of Religion* (New York, 1970); "History of Mysticism" in Edwards Paul (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (New York, 1967), vol. 5; "Understanding Religious Experience" in Steven T. Katz (ed.), *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York, 1978).
8. R. C. Zaehner's three major works are *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London, 1960); *Mysticism. Sacred and Profane* (London, 1957); and *Concordant Discord* (London, 1970).
9. He has discussed his standpoint in his article "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism" in Steven T. Katz. (ed.), *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York, 1978).
10. For detailed discussion see "Reality in Sikhism" (chap. III) and "Social Reality" (chap. VII) in Nirbhai Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism: Reality and Its Manifestations* (Delhi, 1990).
11. I have discussed this problem of reconciliation of personalism and impersonalism in my book, *Philosophy of Sikhism: Reality and Its Manifestations*, pp. 107-22.

SONGS AND SINGERS: RAVIDĀS AND THE GURU GRANTH*

WINAND M. CALLEWAERT

Probably not more than 50 years were needed for the songs of Ravidas to have entered into the repertoires of travelling singers. And when around AD 1600 they started to be written down in sectarian and voluminous manuscripts, these songs had undergone numerous minor and quite a few important changes. Amazingly, scribes added very few variants, as appears from my study of eleven 17th century manuscripts which give the songs of Ravidas. Nearly all different readings have to be traced to the period of oral transmission, when singers took the songs to villages all over north-west India.

Travelling singers knew no borders. They easily walked from the kingdoms in and around Banaras through the Mughal territories to the princely states in Rajasthan, or from the Marāthā country to the Punjab. With an amazing ease also they moved from one regional language to another, using a supra-regional medium, while at the same time picking up local idioms and words in an effort to adjust to local audiences. This effort is responsible for the linguistic and stemmatic chaos we find in the manuscripts.

The singer sang the songs which were most in demand, such as those of Namdev and Kabir, which they had learned from their fathers. They too were artists and inspired by a particular environment they added new, sometimes their own songs, to the repertoire.

Memory was their only way of recording, but as the repertoires grew bigger, some musicians started to keep little (or big)

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notebooks as an aid to their memory. The earliest manuscripts seem to have had these notebooks as their basis. The manuscripts of the 17th century that have been preserved are copies of these early notes now lost. Scholars of the 20th century have to rely on 17th century manuscripts which are copies of the scribbled notes of singers in order to reconstruct and edit what the singers were singing. I do not say : "to reconstruct what Ravidas was singing."

The interaction between regional dialects, and between singers and audiences, is an exciting phenomenon which we now can study only through a careful analysis of manuscripts. No doubt, most literature of 15-16th century North India has to be studied through manuscripts in which that literature is preserved. A special discipline, however, is required to study the songs which have long been in the hands of singers *before* being written down. For these songs the text-critic cannot reconstruct a scribal archetype. There never was one. Corrupt readings need not be listed as text-critical clues, in view of an 'emended, original' text. At best we can try to reconstruct oral archetypes (in the plural)¹, but my argument may convince the reader that even oral archetypes cannot be found. Text-critical clues based on variants of oral origin can only point to the possibility of originality in most cases, and to the relative certainty in some cases. I consider the songs as independent units and do away with the traditional, text-critical approach which treats a corpus of songs as a homogeneous, literary piece. The songs have to be treated and studied separately, because songs underwent creative changes by singers not only throughout each repertoire, but even independently. As a result, we do not have a repertoire which gives the 'best' reading throughout. The meagre result of our detailed analysis will be that the most reliable, text-critical clue is this simple rule of thumb: take the reading which gives the best sense, even if that reading is, for one song, found in one or several repertoires; and for another song, found in other repertoires.

The argument in the following pages aims at defining the possibility or the certainty of originality, with a description of the manuscripts and of the repertoires (1) and of the different kinds of oral variants (2).

Why do I make this attempt? One reason is that no existing

edition gives an accurate reading of the songs of Ravidas, because of a misreading of the manuscript or because only a single manuscript (with corrupt readings) was used. It does help to compare manuscripts ! The second reason is that by treating the songs as units in repertoires, I can identify similar songs, even if the order of lines within the song is hopelessly different. They are not necessarily different songs created by Ravidas on different occasions. They are identical, but singers changed them drastically. A comparison with the Guru Granth versions amply illustrates this point.

1. THE MANUSCRIPTS AS SINGERS' REPERTOIRES

During the last ten years we have been eyewitnesses to a phenomenon which must also have occurred in the 16th century in northern India, and which is the cause of headaches for today's text-critics: as a *sant* becomes more popular, the number of songs in his name goes on increasing.

In his introduction² Hawley has beautifully described how Ravidas and the temple built for him on the banks of the Ganges in Banaras are symbols for the growing self-confidence of the low castes in India. On the inner walls of this huge Ravidas temple 203 *padas* and more than 200 *sākhīs* are inscribed in marble.³ Similarly, because of their clear message and inner quality, *sants* became popular in 16-17th century India: both during their lifetime and after their death songs were added to the repertoires.

Our 'critical' edition of the oeuvre of Ravidas⁴ is based on 12 different recensions, giving as many repertoires. None of the manuscripts appears to have been copied from any other we used, and the hypothesized relations among manuscripts were as much contradicted as corroborated, in the course of the study. This continuous inconsistency is a frustrating experience indeed, if one seeks to approach the text with a traditional, text-critical methodology. The manuscripts dated before AD 1700 give us a broad spectrum of repertoires. In them we find the songs of Ravidas commonly sung during the late 16th and the early 17th centuries. Anything not found in these documents, but found only in documents dated after AD 1700, is highly suspect of having been added after that time. Further, songs found in only one of the repertoires studied may have less chance of belonging to the early core of songs

produced by Ravidas.

I do not say that the songs we do find in all the 17th century repertoires must be by Ravidas. At best we can say that a song found in all or most repertoires is likely to have been by Ravidas. For a fine example of curious attribution I refer to three songs found in the *Sarvāṅgi* of Rajab with the name of Pipa, Hardas and Adhar, and in the Guru Granth with Ravidas in *bhanita*. There may be many more examples of this kind, but I am grateful to Peter Friedlander for having pointed out these to me.

Song 97 is found only in the Guru Granth (Asa 5, vol. I, p. 487), with Ravidas, but is found in the *Sarvāṅgi* of Rajab (Iraqi edition 22.12, p. 172) under Asavari, with 'Hardas' in the additional lines. In the Pancvani manuscripts giving the songs of Hardas, this song appears under Rag Asavari. Is it of Hardas or of Ravidas?

Song 112 is found only in the Guru Granth (Malar, vol. 2, p. 1293), with Ravidas, but is found in the *Sarvāṅgi* of Rajab (Iraqi edition 22.21, p. 173) under Asavari and with Pipa in the *bhanita*.

Finally, song 107 is found only in the Guru Granth (Bilaval 2, vol.2, p. 858), with Ravidas, but in the *Sarvāṅgi* of Rajab (Iraqi edition 22.12, p. 170) the song is by or attributed to Adhar.

1.A. THE FATEHPUR MANUSCRIPT

This manuscript (AD 1582)⁵ gives the earliest repertoire with the songs of Ravidas. In the Introduction Bahura states that there are 8 padas by Ravidas or Raudas. In fact, song 5-8 (about the *banijara*) are one song in all Panc-vani manuscripts.⁶ It has 24 lines. In Hawley: 1988 the four parts are translated as four songs. Four of the five songs (34, 51, 66, 86) in the Fatehpur manuscript are also found in the Guru Granth.

The following 5 songs are found in this earliest manuscript:

Song 33 (*jangli gauri*): fo. 190-92; *rag gauri*. This song is numbered 5-8. In the Guru Granth and in the Rajasthani manuscripts, it is one song. The *bhanita* gives 4 times Raudas.

Song 34 (*jangli gauri*): fo. 146; Ravidas, *rag sarang*.

Song 51 (*sorath*): fo. 157; Ravidas, *rag sorath*.

Song 67 (*bilaval*): fo. 146; Ravidas, *rag sarang*.

Song 86 (*dhanasri*): fo. 152; Ravidas; *rag sarang*.

Two songs have a *rag* which is different from the *rag* in most other manuscripts : song 67 has *rag sarang* for *bilaval*, and song 34 has *sarang* for *jangli gauri*. The others have the same *rag* as

most other manuscripts. The songs with a different *rag* show also a great diversity in order of lines and in readings. As an illustration I refer to song 67 in our 'critical edition'. The 5 songs in the Fatehpur manuscript belong to a repertoire nowhere else represented in any manuscript at our disposal. This does not surprise us, since we know that the kind of collection we have in that manuscript is also totally different from the other manuscripts.

1.B. THE GURU GRANTH

In the Guru Granth, we find 40⁷ songs attributed to Ravidas and of these only 19 are found in the Rajasthani manuscripts. Here again the difference in *rag* points to the independent position of the Guru Granth repertoire, which must have separated from other repertoires at a very early stage after (or even during?) Ravidas's life: only 10 are found with the same *ragas* in the Rajasthani manuscripts.

I am tempted to propose that the *padas* which have the same *rag* in the Guru Granth and in the Rajasthani manuscripts are likely to have belonged to a very early common source.

I suggest that the singers wandering the Rajasthani roads around AD 1550 drew their repertoires from a common source. But this source is different from the source which gave us the Guru Granth repertoires.

One important point can be made at this stage: we can no longer call the Guru Granth the oldest available version of, for example, Ravidas's or Kabir's *padas*. What we find in the 17th century Rajasthani manuscripts is a different musical version which may well be as old as the musical version from which the Punjabi singers drew their inspiration, if not older. At what muddy or sandy crossroads did singing families go their own way, and at what point in history? We do not know, but the division certainly began quite early.

References for the *Padas* (also) in the Guru Granth.⁸

1. *bhairau* 1; p. 1167
12. *ramkali* 1; p. 973
24. *gaudi* 1; p. 345
32. *gaudi* 5; p. 346
34. *siri* 1; p. 93
36. *gaudi* 2; p. 345

39. *gujri* 1; p. 525
40. *asa* 4; p. 486
43. *asa* 3; p. 486
44. *asa* 1; p. 486
47. *malar* 1; p. 1293
51. *sorathi* 2; p. 658
53. *kedara* 1; p. 1124
55. *sorathi* 5; p. 658
57. *sorathi* 1; p. 657
64. *suhi* 2; p. 793
66. *maru* 5; p. 990
69. *suhi* 1; p. 793
78. *gaudi* 3; p. 345
82. *dhanasri* 1; p. 694
86. *malar* 3; p. 1293
88. *jaitsri* 1; p. 710

Seventeen Padas of 'Ravidas' in the Guru Granth are not found in the Rajasthani manuscripts.

95. *gauri* 4; p. 346
96. *asa* 2; p. 486
97. *asa* 5; p. 487
98. *asa* 6; p. 487
99. *sorathi* 3; p. 658
100. *sorathi* 4; p. 658 = *maru* 2, p. 1106
101. *sorathi* 6; p. 658
102. *sarathi* 7 p. 658
103. *dhanasari* 3; p. 694
104. *suhi* 3; p. 794
105. *bilaval* 1; p. 858
- 106¹⁰ *bilaval* 2; p. 858
107. *goda* 1; p. 875
108. *goda* 2; p. 875
- 109¹¹ *maru* 1; p. 1106
110. *basant* 1 ; p. 1196
- 111¹² *malar* 2; p. 1293

1.C. THE PANC-VANI MANUSCRIPTS

When western scholars discovered the greatness of the

Rajasthani mystic Dadu Dayal (AD 1544-1603) about half a century ago, they were struck by his straightforward and simple message. Expounding the characteristic ideals of the *sants*, he and his disciples preached sincere and loving *bhakti* to God and fellowship among men.

What scholars were not aware of was the greatness of the literary activity in the early Dadupanth, during Dadu's lifetime and soon after. Some were aware of the vast amount of manuscripts carefully preserved in the Dadu-dvaras all over Rajasthan, and even in Delhi, but only recently has it become clear that the early Dadupanth did more than take great care to preserve manuscripts. Possibly Dadu himself, and certainly his early disciples formed a nucleus of literary activity that has been very influential in Northern India. About two thematic anthologies compiled by Dadupanthi early in the 17th century, called Sarvangi— one by Rajab and one by Gopaldas— I have written elsewhere.¹³

In Dadupanthi manuscripts we further find huge collections of songs classified according to *rag*, i.e. to the mode to which singers most probably sang the songs (*padas*). In these *rag* oriented manuscripts of the Dadupanth, Ravidas's songs are part of a larger corpus called *Panc-vani*, literally the 'Songs of the Five'. These are the Vanis of the five highly-respected poets in the Dadupanth: Dadu, Kabir, Namdev, Raidas and Hardas, in that order. Having seen many *Panc-vani* manuscripts all over North India, I eventually selected seven for my study of Ravidas.¹⁴

In the list below I give a description of the manuscripts selected, with the siglum, catalogue number, *lipikal*, number of Hindi songs of Ravidas and the folios where these songs are found¹⁵.

- D DMVJ, No. 12; AD 1636; 71 *padas*; fo. 208-20.
- V VBJ, No. 34; AD 1658; 70 *padas*; fo. 235-47.
- A Amritsar, GNDU No. 875; AD 1675; 65 *padas*; fo. 255-65.
- H Naraina, private copy; AD 1653; 65 *padas*; fo. 235-47.
- I VRI, 9693; AD 1643; 81 *padas*; fo. 171-180.
- M DMVJ, No. 2; AD 1676; 68 *padas*, fo. 138-44.
- P Patiala, No. 2706; AD 1698; 68 *padas*; fo. 228-35.

In the *Panc-vani* manuscripts we find the complete works

of five poets in a regular order: Dadu, Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, Hardas. I noted two exceptions: manuscript *m* gives Dadu, Garibdas, Kabir, Namdev, Raidas and Hardas, and in manuscript *v* we find Dadu, Rajab, Kabir, Namdev, Raidas and Hardas.

In the non-*Panc-vani* collections *c* and *j* (see below, 1.d) we find the complete Vanis only of Namdev, Kabir and Ravidas.

Looking at the consistent order (Dadu, Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas and Hardas) in all the *Panc-vani* manuscripts, we might be tempted to imagine that the numerous *Panc-vani* manuscripts we have today all go back to a single archetype, compiled by one of the learned disciples of Dadu, perhaps even under the guru's direct inspiration. It might seem to us that this archetypal exemplar served as the basis for all later copies, the earliest now extant being dated AD 1636.

Such an idyllic thought, cherished by text-critics up till the present, must be given up. The *Panc-vani* manuscripts now at hand cannot go back to one archetype or to any single compiler.

With the hypothesis that the *Panc-vani* tradition in the Dadupanth started around AD 1600, we face the amazing fact that there must have been several *Panc-vani* compilers, each working separately either from existing manuscripts or in direct contact with the oral tradition. We can no longer speak of one Rajasthani *Panc-vani* recension or Western path tradition. The early *Panc-vani* manuscripts give us as many different repertoires as there are manuscripts. (This is amply illustrated below, in 2: Singers' Variants).
1.D. THE MANUSCRIPTS U AND C/J.

Not all the Rajasthani 'musical' manuscripts which I consulted for my study of Ravidas, are of the *Panc-vani* type. Manuscript U is Dadupanthi but not *Panc-vani* and manuscripts C and J may be defined as 'Natha-Siddha', because many songs of Gorakh and other Nathas are given in them. Manuscripts C and J are huge compilations of the songs and sayings of Siddhas, They include along with Ravidas *nirgun* poets like Kabir and Namdev, who seem to have been popular in the 17th century Natha circles. Like the *Panc-vani* collections, these Natha collections are of a musical kind, classifying songs according to *rags*, Although postdating the Dadupanthi collections, they are independent repertoires, relying

on an independent source.

C CPJ, No. 3322; AD 1660 and 1669; 65 songs; fo. 1-18.

J CPJ, No. 1853; AD 1681; 65 songs; fo. 172-96.

U VBJ, No. 12; AD 1686; 62 songs; fo. 118-26.

2. SINGERS' VARIANTS

Because of a plainly direct link with different musical traditions, the manuscripts contain variants which were introduced during the musical transmission, along with those produced by scribes. For example, the inversion in the order of words, of half-lines and of lines is clearly the result of a singer's tampering with the song.

These songs were handled by singers and different repertoires were written down around AD1600, simultaneously and independently. Surprisingly, however, even the manuscripts supposedly belonging to the same singing tradition do not give a consistent reading. There is as much contradiction as consistency, to such a point that it looks easier to explain the inconsistencies than the similarities in reading. And if so much inconsistency is noted, why do we still have so many similar readings? In the following sections it will be amply demonstrated how an apparent relation between manuscripts or repertoires is over and again contradicted by different kinds of relations.

When studying the different manuscripts giving the songs of Ravidas, I set out with the desire to find a relation between manuscripts in order to arrive at a stemma. And from the stemma I hoped to arrive at a 'critical' text. I soon gave up looking for a scribal stemma, and began hoping to find an 'oral' stemma. Putting together the oral stemmatic clues, can we find a consistent pattern? Can we see links between the repertoires, which take us to the common source, to Ravidas? Here again, the answer is no. There is no consistent relation between the repertoires as is amply demonstrated below. If we expect some kind of relation between the following groups:

Pāñc-vāni manuscripts *a d h i m p v*;

manuscripts *c/f*;

manuscript *u*,

We are disappointed. There is no regular pattern.

I start with the *rāg* pattern.

2. A. VARIANT RĀG

Indian musicians used to sing clusters of songs according to particular modes, called *rāg*. It appears that first the singers sang a particular *pada* in a particular *rāg*; then they grouped together the *padas* which were to be sung in the same *rāg*. Consequently, a *rāg* is like an identity-card for the earliest period of oral transmission. It was only later, when compilers took over, that *padas* were classified in *aṅgs*, according to the main theme, in e.g. the *Sarvāṅgis*.

A song could be sung to different *rāg*' As a result we find songs classified under different *rāgs* in different manuscripts. This variation in classification is obviously not due to a scribe's intervention, but stems from the oral period itself, when the songs were in the hands of the singers. Subsequently, the songs were transmitted under different *rāgs* and appeared as such also in the manuscripts. Thus, by looking at the *rāg* structure we are able to make a preliminary classification of the musical recensions.

The PV¹⁶ manuscripts *a d h i m p v* have only roughly the same order of *rāgs* and generally the same order of songs under each *rāg*. In manuscript *u* not only is the order of *rāg* groups different from the PV manuscripts, but also the order of songs within each group. The pattern in the manuscripts *c/j* is totally different.

For song 22 PV manuscript *a* and manuscript *j* give *māli gauri*, manuscript *c* gives *malār* and manuscript *u* gives *jaitśri* instead of *rāmgari* in the other repertoires.

In song 23, only *j* gives a different *rāg*. In songs 33, 72 and 73 only manuscripts *c/j* give a different *rāg*, while in song 50 only *c* gives a different *rāg*.

Amazingly, a different *rāg* may be given in *c/j* but also in some of the PV manuscripts, as in song 34 or in *u* and in some of the PV manuscripts as in song 35. See also song 89.

A different *rāg* in only manuscript *a* is found in songs 37, 38 and 39. For a variation in only 2 PV manuscripts and not in the others, see songs 58 and 81.¹⁷

2. B. INCONSISTENT OCCURRENCE

What degree of consistency do we see when we look at the occurrence of songs in each repertoire?

Song 16 is found in PV *m* and in *c/j*, while song 17 is found in in PV *i* and in *u* and *c/j*.

Song 25 is found in PV *i v* and *u*, but not in PV *a d h m p* nor in *c/j*. Song 30 on the other hand is found in PV *a d i v* and in *u* and in *c/j*.

If we look carefully at the other *rāg* groups, we wonder how on earth the repertoires ever took shape.

2. C. INVERSIONS, DIFFERENT LINES AND OMISSIONS

This section is by itself enough proof that most variants in the manuscripts were brought about by singers, not by scribes. What is striking, however, is the lack of consistency even in that pattern. If we accept that a particular manuscript represents a particular repertoire, we should find a consistency at least within each manuscript. We do not. Sometimes lines are inverted in manuscripts A an B in one song, but in mss. A and C in another song, and not in B. This happens all the time. There may be several explanations. One : a scribe copying a manuscript with a particular version decides he knows better from his own memory... and he changes a few words. Would he have inverted complete lines? Two: even repertoires are not fixed and we have to consider each song separately. Could it be that a scribe or anyone writing down for the first time borrowed songs from different repertoires/ And on what basis?

CONCLUSION

When we construct a tentative stemma on the basis of the similarity in the order in which the songs were arranged under the heading of a *rāg*, then our efforts will continually be contradicted by the dissimilarity of the oral and scribal variants. The result is a totally blurred and confused pattern, if any pattern appears at all. If we seek to establish an 'original text' on the basis of stemmatic clues, we deceive ourselves for the simple reason that a *critical text* perhaps never existed.

Or, if Ravidas once sang his songs, very soon they became the property of singers who handled them according to their own inspiration, musical genius and particular dialect. Singers may well have combined several versions they had heard, and passed on to their students or their relatives new textual combinations. We may

assume that it was mostly the capable singers, those who were more poetic and creative, who prevailed; we notice the consequences in the stemmatic chaos before us.

If there is no stemma and no justified 'critical' text, then what do we have/ I have the conviction that soon after the year 1500 an enthusiasm for Ravidas's songs gripped people in Rajasthan and Punjab. Poets and musicians sang and recited his verses, adding songs or lines of their own or changing the lines according to their own taste and genius.

What then can be the criterion for selecting a particular reading? It is not the stemmatic relation, but the best reading. And this best reading is not found throughout in one manuscript/repertoire. The text-critic has to consult and compare all available (old) manuscripts. On the basis of these he selects what may have been a meaningful reading in AD 1600. There may, perhaps, never be a way to find out to what an extent these songs and these particular versions were also created by Ravidas.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For the 'archetypes' of the *Pañc-vāṇi* see W.M. Callewaert and Mukund Lath, *The Hindi Padāvali of Nāmdev*, Leuven, 1989, pp. 99f. Nāmdev is another Bhakta whose *pads* are found in the *Ādi Granth*.
2. J. S. Hawley and M. Juergensmeyer, *Songs of the Saints of India*, OUP, New York, 1988.
3. Communication by Shukdeo Singh, Banaras.
4. W. M. Callewaert & P. Friedlander, *The Life and Works of Raidās*, Delhi : Manohar, 1992.
5. Edited by G.N. Bahura and K.E. Bryant, *The Padas of Surdas*, (City Palace) Jaipur, 1982. For a fine description of this very valuable manuscript, see Bahurā, G.N., 'Sūrdās kā Pad : The Fatehpur Manuscript of 1639 VS (AD 1582)', in Monika Thiel-Horstmann (ed.), *Bhakti in Current Research, 1979-1982*, 1983, pp. 19-23.
6. A nearly identical song is found in the *Dādū-vāṇi* (P. Caturvedi ed., p. 504 —, *Grantha paharā*). Two such *paharās* are also attributed to Guru Nānak in the *Ādi Granth* (*Sri rāg*). See also C.H. Childers. 'Banjārās', in : L.S. Leshnik & G. Sontheimer, *Pastoralists and Nomads in South-Asia*, Wiesbaden, 1975, pp. 247-65.
7. There are 39 songs, if we consider songs 100 and 101 as identical (see further). I do not know whether the songs appearing with the names of Pipā, Hardās or Adhār (see above) in the Rajasthani manuscripts should be

considered as 'not of Ravidās'.

There are 41 songs if we consider a song attributed to Guru Nānak in the *Ādi Granth* (*mārū*, p. 990) as 'of Ravidās', as it is in the Fatehpur manuscript and in the Dādūpanthi manuscripts (song 66).

8. The first figure refers to the song in our edition. I further refer to the Devnāgarī edition of the *Ādi Granth Sāhib*, 2 vols, Shromaṇī Gurduārā Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar.
9. *Pad* 97 is attributed to Hardās in Rajasthani manuscripts.
10. *Pad* 106 is attributed to Adhār in the Sarvangis.
11. *Pad* 109 is attributed to Dādū in Rajasthani manuscripts.
12. *Pad* 111 is attributed to Pipā in the Sarvaingis.
13. Rajab: *The Sarvāṅgī of the Dādūpanthī Rajab*, Leuven, 1978, 446 p., and Gopāldās : *A 17th c. Anthology of Hindi Poetry*, in : *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica*, 5, 1975, 187-96. An edition, with Introduction and Word-Index, of the complete Gopāldās Sarvāṅgī is published by Manohar, (Delhi, 1992).
14. In a similar study of the songs of Nāmdev (Callewaert-Lath, *The Hindī Padāvali of Nāmdev*, Leuven, Delhi, 1989) we noticed that these *Pañc-vāṇi* manuscripts—which give the Nāmdev repertoire in a *Pañc-vāṇi* context—can be classified into two groups, depending on the first song they give and on the sequence of songs (see p. 83ff.). This division of the *Pañc-vāṇi* manuscripts into two such groups is not so evident in the *Pañc-vāṇi* repertoires with the songs of Ravidās.
15. For the libraries I use the following abbreviations:
 DMVJ Dādū Mahāvidyālay, Jaipur
 GNDU Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
 VBJ Vidyā Bhūṣan Saṅgrah, Jaipur
 CPJ City Palace, Jaipur
 For the manuscripts (of later date) in my film collection, which were not used for the collation, see W.M. Callewaert & G. De Brabandere, *Nirguṇa Literature on Microfilm in Leuven, Belgium*, in : *IAVRI Bulletin*, London, IX (Dec. 1981), 24-48.
16. PV stands for *Pañc-vāṇi*.
17. For a detailed analysis, see *The Life and Works of Ravidās*, Delhi, Manohar, 1992.

BHAKTA NAMDEV—A BRIEF STUDY OF HIS SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE*

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB

Bhakta Namdev, believed to be born in the thirteenth century, is one of the saints whose *bani* was selected for inclusion in *Adi Granth* by its compiler Guru Arjun, 'the fifth Sikh Guru. The criterion for the inclusion of the compositions of the saints other than the Gurus themselves was that they should have voiced devotion to the supreme Being alone, should have given expression to spiritual experience and to idealism in faith rather than to external ritual and should, moreover, have striven to lift mankind above the narrow and constricting considerations of caste, religious hate and rancour, and inculcated among men the spirit of humanitarianism. Namdev was honoured for inclusion in the Scripture on all these counts. His hymns express a deeply uplifting God-consciousness and leave the soul purified and full of deep compassion for humanity. He is among the major contributors out of the saints to *Adi Granth*, judged by the volume of their compositions selected—the others being Kabir, whose hymns come next only to the Gurus in volume, Farid and Ravidas. It is a rich testimony to the liberalism of Guru Arjun's search for the voice of the questing soul and for idealism that he ranged far and wide and preserved in *Adi Granth* the quintessence of the spiritual teaching of India during the centuries after the establishment of Muslim rule and that search for the principle of truth towards the discovery of which the soul of India was directed in the face of the manifold complications in the national life brought about both by the long-continuing rigidity and immobility of the Hindu way of life and the challenge posed by

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Islam. What must have particularly appealed to Guru Arjun in Namdev was not only that he came from a lower section of society, judged by the caste code, and yet rose to high spiritual state as teacher and mystic, but also that he was a witness to faith to which he escaped being a martyr by only the slenderest chance. These and other noble aspects of Namdev's personality are represented in the selection of the hymns in *Adi Granth*, which are some sixty in number.

THE LANGUAGE OF NAMDEV'S HYMNS

The hymns included in *Adi Granth* under Namdev's name are arranged, as was customary for lyrical compositions in the medieval times in India, under the different *ragas* or measures in which these might be sung. Thus, these are under Gauri, Asa, Gujar, Sorath, Dhanasari, Todi, Tilang, Bilawal, Ramkali, Basant, and some others. In the Sikh temple services these might be sung, should the musicians be accomplished, in their respective measures. The veneration accorded to these hymns, by the injunction of the Guru, is exactly the same as to the Gurus own compositions. This, incidentally, is evidence of a universal religious attitude of mind fostered in the spiritual tradition initiated by Guru Nanak and continued so scrupulously after him to this day. As far as the language of the hymns from Namdev included in *Adi Granth* may be characterized, it may be said to be the spoken Braji idiom strongly overlaid with Marathi. There is, except here and there, little in these hymns that may be characterized as Punjabi. Even where there appears to be a distinct departure from the Braji-Marathi admixture, that too is in the direction of Braji with a faint tinge of the Punjabi idiom, not very distinct from the vocabulary and idiom generally employed by Guru Arjun himself. Without trying to go into the question of the complete authenticity of the text as being strictly words of Namdev's own composition, there appears to be no doubt that as far as oral tradition in the time of Guru Arjun, more than two centuries after the demise of Namdev could preserve his words, it might be said to be a faithful record of the great Maharashtrian saint, who in the course of his travels spent a considerable time in the North, including areas of the Punjab. The language which is the precursor of modern Hindi had already

become a kind of *lingua franca* for religious compositions of Northern and Central India, to which the local touch would naturally be added by a composer or writer coming from a different language area. Purism, moreover, had not yet become such a rage as it became later, and content rather than style was what was valued most. Hence, making allowance for some minor alterations consequent upon Namdev's compositions being carried mostly by oral tradition over a period of two centuries, the text of his hymns in *Adi Granth* may be accepted to be more or less as it issued from his own spirit. This is a great tribute as much to the devoted search of those who were commissioned by Guru Arjun to collect these hymns as to his own sensitiveness and genius in exercising a vigorously satisfying selection, leaving no doubt as to the genuineness of the compositions. The deep spiritual and aesthetic quality of these hymns which have the power to stir the soul as only the most genuine poetry can, leave no doubt as to their authenticity in their verbal structures. The deep spiritual and moral experience, and the authentic voice of the soul which spoke in these hymns, is distinguished from the banality of the level of the moral or spiritual teaching of much of the current hymnology from medieval times.

To touch upon the question of the vocabulary and verbal structures in these hymns, in most places there is the genuine Marathi character of these, which this language still bears after this long passage of time. To take a few instances, in the formation of the past tense and some noun forms one constantly comes upon expressions like: *anile, katile, bhaila, kopila, bharaile, daila, chhadiala, rakhiale, paudhioole, koili, bedhiale, ubhkale, chhootla*, and several others. In forming the possessive form of pronoun again: *janche, tanchi, tumche, hamche*, etc. Prepositional forms like *ibhe, ubhe* are met with. In a hymn on page 693 of *Adi Granth*, the language is almost totally Marathi, with a faint touch of Braji. It would be beyond the scope of this paper to give a list of all the Marathi verb forms and other parts of speech occurring in these hymns, but these may be easily identified. There is, for example, the repeated use of *bai* for lady, which is still characteristic of Marathi. In the concluding portion of the same hymn, the language structure becomes close to Braji with a touch of Punjabi.

This may have meant 'editing' of this portion by someone who conveyed the composite hymn to Guru Arjun. Be that as it may, the wonderful thing is the preservation of the Marathi idiom and structure and their transmission to the readers of *Adi Granth*.

In a number of hymns the Marathi touch appears to recede and the language is preponderantly Braj-Hindi (for example in a hymn on pages 692-93 beginning : *Gahri kar kai neev khudae.*)

This reference to the character of the language of the hymns is rendered necessary particularly to point out that there is little in them which can be said to belong to Punjabi. There is a point of view from which all Sikh religious writings (and Namdev's as far as these are in *Adi Granth*, fall under this category) are included in the total range of Punjabi literature. What, however, may justify their being so included may be not their language, but the fact of these being part of the corpus of Sikh religious literature and their being written in the Gurumukhi script. The language of Namdev and Ravidas totally and of Kabir for the most part, however, is removed from the Punjabi idiom, medieval or modern. This is the caveat without which to describe Namdev's hymns from *Adi Granth* as being in Punjabi would lead to serious misunderstanding. There is a hymn from Jaidev, author of *Gita Govinda*, also in *Adi Granth*, which is more or less Sanskrit. This only shows that the Guru sought to make a collection of devotional poetry of the higher spiritual experience and moral teaching from most regions of India, irrespective of the differences of language and dialect in which it was expressed. The key-terms and basic philosophical ideas and concepts in much of this teaching being common, these compositions were understood more or less distinctly by those whose minds were attuned to spiritual experience.

Before closing this section on language, I should touch upon another characteristic of Namdev's compositions—namely, his use of Persian. In hymn which is cast, as is a frequent mode with Namdev, in the form of a kind of dialogue, several sentences are in Persian. The same language character may be seen in the hymn preceding that (page 727). Apart from sentences or phrases in Persian, there is a fairly considerable use of terms drawn from the Muslim religious background which by the end of the thirteenth

century must have gained good currency over even distant parts of India. Without expecting to be understood, Namdev obviously would not have employed words like *kalandar*, *mir*, *bismil*, *jabab*, *majuri*, *gharib*, *maskin*, *karim*, *rahim*, *ghani*, *huzur*, *bisiyar*, *digar*, and several others.

EXPRESSION OF SPIRITUAL AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Namdev, like the other great medieval saints who lifted themselves above polytheism and image-worship to the worship of the *Nirakar* or Formless Brahm, has given deeply stirring expression to the vision which at its height is called *Advaita* (non-Duality or Monism). Since this vision, when transmuted in terms of Bhakti, is deeply and richly emotional, it acquires a great deal of the character of the poetry of love. Only in the case of the Bhaktas whose creed is worship of the Formless (*Nirakar Brahm*) it is the love not of a visible image of a personalized deity, but of a Personalized Reality or Abstraction, invested with all the high and noble attributes which may draw the love and adoration of man. It may, with due allowance for the total experience of each individual saint, be called a form of *Visista-Advaita* or Non-Duality with Attributes. The conception of the Supreme Being as it emerges from the hymns of Namdev is that of the Formless Brahm, who pervades the entire universe as Soul or Self and who may not be confined within the limits of a man-made place of worship. Says he on page 875 of *Adi Granth*: Nama worships Him who is confined neither within the Hindu's temple nor the Muslim's mosque.

Like the other saints in the tradition of the worship of the Formless Brahm, Namdev has employed the traditional mythological names to describe the object of his adoration, such as Hari, Murari, Madhava, Ram, Narayana, Keshava, and especially the periphrastic names of Krishna. Here and there he has used also names drawn from the Muslim background. Particularly beloved of him is the name Vithal, which, as the dictionary will tell us, is especially employed to Vishnu at Pandharpur, the centre of the Namdev cult. All these names of deities from the Hindu Pantheon are used with an idealized signification—as names shorn of their mythological popular adhesions and sublimated to describe the

Formless, Eternal, Uncreated Brahm. This phenomenon is well known to those who have acquired a fair knowledge of the development of religious thought in India. Only in the case of Namdev as also of the Gurus of the Sikh faith, there is, in contradistinction to the average Hindu's maintenance of a dual stance of mythological as well as Formless Brahm attitude of reference, a complete breaking free of the mythological adhesions. Here only the Formless Brahm remains as referent. In the spiritual evolution of Namdev himself, of which several glimpses emerge from the hymns in *Adi Granth*, in the earlier phase, before entering into the experience of the devotion to the Formless, there was the phase of ardent Vishnu Bhakti, the worship of Vithal as an aspect of Vishnu. This was a phase of intense faith, in which the worshipper passes through an experience which is almost like love of the concrete. Says Namdev, delineating the intensity of such experience :

I filled a bowl with milk and a pot with water,
 And milked the spotted white cow.
 (Placing the milk before the god, prayed:)
 Sip this milk, Lord Govinda.
 Sip it that my heart be filled with joy ;
 Or else my father at home will be cross.
 So, Nama filled with milk the golden cup,
 And placed it before Hari.
 (Said the Lord, pleased :)
 'None is dearer to my heart than my devotees.'
 Beholding Nama, the Lord smiled with pleasure.
 Thus feasting the Lord on milk, the devotee came home.
 Nama did have sight of the Lord... (Pp. 1163-64)

Other hymns similarly express his intense Krishna-worship, whom he has apostrophized in one place as Jadam-Rai (King of Yadavas). But the overwhelming tone and significance is Brahm-worship—worship of the Formless, into whom merge all deities and creeds. Namdev, from his elevated station as a worshipper of Brahm and a mystic above the narrowness of creeds, casts contempt and ridicule over the beliefs of votaries of sectarian creeds and institutionalized religious conventions. Of these ample illustrations will be found in the hymns included in *Adi Granth*.

Mystical experience has found expression in two forms, especially in the hymns of Namdev. One of these is the deep, inti-

mate apprehension of Divine Immanence—the feeling of all existence being permeated with God. This is known as Vedanta. This is a sublime experience, expressed in the form as said just now, of the apprehension of the pervasive, Divine Presence. Then there is the feeling of the identity of the worshipper merged into God. Says he in one hymn (page 1166) : Between Nama and Narayan there is no distinction. Again, on page 1164, saith Namdev : I have fallen in love with God : He dwelleth in my soul. Of the apprehension of the Divine in all existence, a prominent illustration out of several may be given :

The One is manifested in innumerable forms :
 He alone is wherever I look.
 The alluring forms of Maya perplex man's understanding;
 Only the rare souls realize this.
 All that exists is the Lord—the Lord alone ;
 Nothing exists but Govinda ;
 Out of a load of thread is spread the complicated warp and woof.
 Waves, foam and bubbles—none is separate from the water.
 All this manifestation is the play of Transcendent Brahm ;
 Nothing else exists.
 What is only illusory and dream-like, man takes it to be real:
 True thinking comes only from the preceptor's teaching—
 On awakening from its stupor, my mind apprehended the truth.
 Saith Namdev : see God's creation with the awakened mind:
 In all creatures lives the Lord alone. (P. 485)

A characteristic of the higher mystical experience is its expression through the various moods redolent of human love. Of these, possessiveness with even a nagging attitude and the treatment of the Divine Being as the Beloved is well known in the poetry of the mystical traditions of India—both Hindu and Perso-Muslim. In the poetry of the Krishna-cult it is Radha, the loving soul who complains of the indifference of the Lord who is given over to dallying, and yearns to possess him, often in this mood affecting to be cross. In the Bhakti poetry of the Formless Brahm tradition, to which Namdev belongs similar moods may be encountered, expressed with the bold and startling originality born of personal intimate experience. The devotee here is patterned not necessarily on Radha, but is the lover in various moods nevertheless. The hymns embodying this experience convey to the listener

the taste and flavour of love idealized and spiritualized. In the Radha-Krishna tradition the lovers are still visualized as a human pair; in such poetry of spiritualized love as Namdev's, while the attitudes maintained are human, yet by a miracle of creative genius concrete personalization is eliminated, leaving alone the voice of love in the abstract, in essence. It is still deeply passionate, affecting and even sensuous at times. A few examples of such moods and ecstasies may here be given in translation. Comment on these would generally be superfluous:

I am crazed by love ;
 The Lord is my Spouse:
 For Him I deck myself in all joy.
 Folks! Traduce me as much as you may—
 My body and soul is all for the Beloved! (P. 1164)

* * *

Brought I a pitcher; filled it with water to bathe the Lord:
 Yet water contains forty-two lakhs of creatures—
 Where is the pure water to bathe Brother-God?
 Wherever I look, there is Brother-Vithal.
 Brought I flowers, and strung them for the Lord's worship:
 Yet humming-bees have smelt the flowers before—
 So how may I offer these to Brother-Vithal?
 Brought I milk, cooked it into a pudding, to make an offering for the
 Lord:
 Yet the calf has sucked the milk first—
 How may I offer this impure milk to Brother-Vithal?
 Vithal is here; Vithal is there; no place is without Vithal.
 Saith Nama: All places are filled by Him;
 In all is He pervasive. (P. 485)

* * *

Dear to me is the Lord, as water to dry Marwar:
 A creeper to the hungry camel, the night cry to the deer:
 Lovely is Thy Name, Lord : lovely Thy form, Thy features.
 Dear to me is the Lord, as the rain-cloud to the earth; fragrance
 of the flower to the humming-bee, mango to the *kokila* ,
 As the sun to the *chakwi* and Mansarovar to the swan,
 As the spouse to the young wife;
 As milk to the babe; as the drop to the *chatrik* ;
 As water to the fish. (P. 693)

* * *

As is the deer captivated by the sound of the bell;
 Loses life but takes not his mind off it—

Even thus I look for the Lord,
 And fix not my mind on anything but Him.
 As intently as the goldsmith watches gold;
 As zealously as the philanderer gazes at the face of the woman he desires ;
 As intently as the gambler watches the throw—
 Even thus do I seek the Lord.
 Him I see wherever I look;
 Nama ever worships His holy feet. (P. 873)

* * *

Nama bears, love to the Lord,
 As the famished man loves food;
 As the thirsty man loves water;
 As the unspiritual value family and friends.
 Nama is in love with the Lord,
 How soul has slid into indifference to the world.
 Nama loves the Lord,
 As the woman, enamoured of a stranger;
 As the covetous man his hoarded wealth;
 As the lecher the woman he lusts with. (P. 1164)

* * *

He is the idol and the temple;
 Himself He doth adore;
 From water are formed waves, and from waves water:
 Thinking alone makes them separate.
 He Himself sings the hymns;
 Himself He blows the pipe.
 Saith Namdev: Thou art the Lord;
 I, man, am unfilled; Thou alone art full;
 (Thus saith the Lord:)
 The devoted servant is my own self:
 The sight of me relieves man of three maladies;
 My touch emancipates him from worldly entanglements.
 Whom I bind, the devotee may emancipate;
 Whom the devotee binds, I may not effect his release.
 Even I, when bound by the devotee, feel all helpless:
 Bound by attributes, I am each one's life;
 My life's breath are my devotees;
 Namdev, he who thus realizes the Lord,
 Is illuminated by His love. (Pp. 1252-53)

Spiritual experience expresses itself in the language of allegory and symbol. In Namdev's compositions this mode may often be come upon. Drawing his imagery from the tailor's trade, which belonged to his people, he has thus expressed spiritual and moral ideas :

My mind is the yardstick, my tongue the scissors:
 With these I measure and cut out the noose of Yama.
 I dye myself in God's dye and stitch the vesture of the soul.
 Away from God, not for a moment am I alive.
 This my needle is of gold; this my thread of silver.
 Nama's heart and soul are involved with God. (P. 485)

In a telling figure again :

The snake may shed its slough, but not its poison
 (Those practising religion for form) are like the stork in the water,
 Looking as if in meditation. (P. 485)

Below is deeply significant figure to convey another aspect
 of the spiritual experience :

Asked me the woman next door:
 Nama ! how hast thou made thy thatch/
 I shall pay double wage—tell me where the Carpenter is that did it.
 Lady, thou canst not recompense that Carpenter.
 Look, that Carpenter is everywhere;
 The Carpenter is the sustenance of our life!
 Whose wishes his thatch made must pay this Carpenter with Love.
 This Carpenter will come of Himself,
 When one breaks ties with the world and with family.
 I have not the power to describe this Carpenter,
 Who pervades all places.
 He who knows this Carpenter is like one dumb,
 Who has tasted of the Joy of *amrita*—
 How may such a one describe Him?
 Listen lady ! This is the Carpenter who has fixed the ocean
 And made the pole-star.
 Nama's Lord has Sita for wife and has honoured Bibhikhana. (P. 657)

Such figures, expressive of the deeper phases of spiritual experience may be met with everywhere with powerful aesthetic effects.

DRAMATIC TOUCHES

A remarkable feature of Namdev's compositions what I would prefer to call is their dramatic character. While in all spiritual poetry there is the implicit personification of the object of worship and spiritual yearning, and a form of invocation, lyrical-dramatic in character, may be seen to be carried on, and the seeker or worshipper seen to stand before a responsive but silent deity, in Namdev's case a more explicit kind of dramatic mode may be seen to be characteristic of his ecstasy. His God, by whatever name he

may invoke Him, appears to be a deeply-felt presence, holding conversation with him and becoming in a visible sense the adored Beloved. We are spiritually startled out of our shell of indifference by the manner in which Namdev makes us aware of his dramatically cast experience. This mode of casting spiritual experience, while it is indicative of the very highest state of ecstasy and communion, becomes at the same time poetry of the highest rank. A few instances of this will be cited under contexts which are shortly going to be touched upon. Here I may mention two which represent this mode with startling originality. The first is from a hymn in which the language is almost completely Marathi :

Beings travel up and down existence like pots on the persian-wheel;
Wandering on the round of existence I have come at last to Thy door.
Who art thou?

I, Sire!

Nama!

Master!

Save me from this house of Maya, leading to Yama.

Lord, Thy way is to uplift the fallen!

Praised be the saints who meditate on Hari, My Master!

On my forehead is pasted the dust of the Master's feet,

Which is unattainable to gods, men and saints.

The Lord, shatterer of arrogance, is compassionate towards the humble.

Nama is a sacrifice to the protection of Thy holy feet. (Pp. 693-94)

The next is likely to be the transcript of a spiritual vision experienced while the poor low-caste wayfarer, Namdev, was yoked to some forced labour by a Mughal near Dwarka. The handsome Mughal on horseback puts the devotee Namdev in a vision of Krishna, Lord of Dwarka and the ultimate in male beauty. In this purely spiritual vision, the devotee is all oblivious of his slave-driver being a Muslim, uttering words of abuse. Nothing but the vision, the ecstasy at the approach of the holy city remains. In this hymn, as also in the one preceding it, Persian has been profusely employed:

Hail friend, hail ! Well met!

May I be a sacrifice to thee.

Nice is thy service ; great thy Name!

Where hast thou come from? Going where? Where to?

True thou tellest, to Dwarka Town!

Handsome is thy turban; sweet thy accents!

Thou a Mughal? No ! Where are Mughals in Dwarks?
 Thousands are the universes; all have one and only one Lord.
 Like thee of swarthy complexion is that King.
 Surya,¹ Indra and Brahma—
 Thou art Nama's Lord—
 Thy Names Mir and Mukund.² (P. 727)

THE VOICE OF HUMAN SUFFERING

Coming from one of the lower castes according to the Hindu caste-code, Namdev was one of those rare souls who asserted their essential humanity as against the arrogance particularly of the priestly class, who claimed to be the repositories of purity and the sole spiritual media between man and God. As is well known, the lower castes had been excluded from the entire spiritual and religious tradition and all places of worship meant for the higher castes. Not only socially, but spiritually too they had been completely disenfranchized. Saintry persons from these castes, both in the South and the North, did establish themselves in the esteem of the people; and, while from a distance they might be venerated, the solid caste structure with all its injunctions and taboos has remained fixed till our day. These saintly persons were great moral and spiritual teachers, but were powerless to break the caste structure with its inhumanity and injustice, and, in the wider sphere, its anti-national evil consequences. While from the teaching of these saints, men had intellectually formulated a vague belief in the irrelevance of caste in matters spiritual, in the actual practice of life, the weight of the millennia-old tradition asserted itself. There were different ways in which the few low-caste persons who attained the dignity of sainthood reacted to the ignominy of their birth. Kabir just threw contempt and ridicule at the holy pretensions of the Brahmin. His powerful intellect was able to win veneration for himself over vast areas, but not to break the caste structure. Ravidas, a contemporary of Kabir, but lower down in the caste-code, has expressed elation at the worship and veneration which he, God's devotee, received, from men of high respect, while his fellow caste-men continued to do the menial and degrading task of clearing animal carcasses right there in Banaras. Namdev living more than a century before Kabir and Ravidas, coming from another area, also

found himself faced with the shame of a low-caste birth. His sensitive soul reacted deeply to this, in a manner which is different from the intellectual polemics of Kabir and the assertive tone of Ravidas. His is the voice of deep human suffering, the cry of pain and anguish, rising into the inaccessibility of the divine sanctum itself. It is the cry of the human heart, rising and, after penetrating the divine ear, bringing back to him spiritual joy, that peace which no human injustice or evil can touch. In the whole range of the medieval religious literature of our country, the only such other voice of human pity which I have come across is that of Guru Nanak, who identified himself in his feelings with the humble millions of India, despite his own high caste. Philosophical and ethical formulations others too have made, but that deep voice issuing from the depths of compassion is hardly anywhere else found.

Namdev's expression on this theme is poignant and sends a deep echo through the soul. There are also fleeting autobiographical touches. In one hymn, on page 1167, he lets fall in a moment of communion with God:

While engaged in Thy worship, Thou didst get them to snatch my cymbals.

To whom shall I convey my cry of suffering?

Nama's Lord is the Controller of the Universe—

Knows best what is good—is unconfined by habitat and home.

On page 486:

He decreed my birth in a dyer's home— still did I receive holy teaching:
Through the grace of holy men Nama hath communed with the Lord.

Besides these brief expressions of the consciousness of the disability of birth in an unjust society, there are two full hymns, each a swiftly-sketched narrative of a deeply moving and fulfilling experience by a man who found in God that love which the cold, unsympathetic world would not give to this son of a poor dyer—low in the caste-scale. There is in these the tragic tone as well as exultation of spirit. Now- a- days one of the highly valued objectives which a writer is enjoined upon to place before himself is the regeneration of society—this generally on the basis of some ideology. In the centuries of social oppression in our country there have been rare souls — Namdev one such — who voiced the suffering of the poor, who stood under a double disability, that of poverty and

social denigration. In such creation is the true spirit of what in our times has come to be known as progressivism: only it is not progressivism in terms of economic amelioration. It is the voice of something higher and deeper – the assertion of the true humanity of man, sought to be smothered and suppressed by the makers of the codes, for which they claimed divine sanction. I shall, without further comment, reproduce here in my own rendering these two great pieces:

With a joyful heart came I into Thy temple;
While engaged in Thy worship, the priest caught me by the hand; pushed
me out.

King of Yadavas!³

Low is my caste;

Why didst Thou curse me with birth in a dyer's home?

Ousted I picked up my blanket and walked to the rear;

Squatted at Thy temple's back.

Behold! as Nama uttered God's praises.

The temple turned its front towards Thy devotee! (P. 1164)

* * *

Ram! Forsake not me – forsake not! forsake not !

These inmates of Thy temple,

Deluded – by their claims of possession,

All fell upon me in wrath,

Shouting at me, 'Shudra ! Shudra!'

They hit me, pushed me outside.

Father Vithal! What shall I do ?

Shouldst Thou grant me Mukti⁴ after death,

Who will then know of it?

This manikin a Brahmin calls me Shudra!

What will he then know of Thy grace?

Thou art known as gracious, merciful–

Thy arms stretched to succour all over the universe.

Thou didst turn the temple-door around to me,

Discomfiting the Brahmin chaps. (P. 1292)

Before concluding this essay with one hymn, the longest and in my view the most exalted expression of Namdev's spiritual experience, his identification with the Lord, his miraculous vision, it may be remarked that Namdev is, besides being a great poet of spiritual experience, a great moral teacher in the more obvious sense. The essence of the moral life in India is seen to lie in the realization of the futility of worldliness, the vision which rises to

see the meaninglessness of man's worldly pursuits. In one such hymn, touching the innermost heart, his teaching is expressed thus, through symbols which hold deep appeal for the Indian mind:

Over deep-dug foundations hast thou erected lofty mansions:

Answer : Will thou live longer than Markandaya

Who sheltered only under a blade of grass?

Our true friend is Ram the Creator.

Man, what art thou so much proud of? This mortal frame will one day be destroyed.

Brother! Kauravas with Duryodhana for brother—

All sought more and more;

The umbrella over his head spanned twelve *yojanas*;

His end? His rotting corpse pecked at by vultures!

The mighty Ravana, lord of the golden Lanka—

What availed him his train of elephants?

All in a moment taken away.

The Yadavas, seeking to fool Durbasa, came to what end!

God hath shown mercy to His servant Namdev,

And engaged him in devotion to Himself. (Pp. 792-93)

NAMDEV'S TESTAMENT TO HIS FAITH

I should wish to conclude this brief survey of Namdev's spiritual history with his narrative of a mighty and soul-stirring experience, reminiscent of similar episodes in the lives of other great teachers, who stood witnesses to their faith, either as martyrs or as those saved by divine intervention. In the *Granth Sahib* there is a similar autobiographical piece by Kabir, who appears to have been accused of heresy and thrown down for trampling before an elephant by order of some potentate. The elephant, moved by divine prompting, refused to do the mahout's bidding, and instead picked up the figure before him, rolled up into a bundle, and offered worship. Kabir's story is moving, but Namdev's is captivating in its power. The piece runs thus:

Said the Sultan: 'Hear thou Nama.

Let me see what thy Ram will do for thee.'

Nama was bound by the Sultan's order, who declared arrogantly,

'Let me see the power of thy Hari Vithal.

Either bring to life this slaughtered cow.

Or else I shall cut off thy head '

Said Nama: 'Great King, how may this happen?

What is slaughtered, cannot be made to live.

No power have I to effect anything:

All that happens is Ram's doing.
 The King at this was in a mighty rage,
 And set a great elephant at Nama.
 Nama's mother lamented and cried.
 She said: 'Leave Ram ! Why not worship Khuda?'
 Said Nama; 'For saying this, I no more am thy son, nor thou my mother.
 Even though this body perish, I still will sing Hari's praises.'
 The elephant struck at Nama with its trunk:
 But Nama was saved through Divine protection.
 Said the King: 'Kazis and Mullahs do me obeisance,
 But this Hindu has humbled me.'
 The Hindus petitioned the Sultan: 'Grant our prayer,
 Free Nama; take gold of equal weight for him.'
 Replied the Monarch: 'If I accept your offer, I fall into hell;
 How may I repudiate faith and follow worldliness?'
 With fetters on his feet Nama yet clapped his hands,
 Singing praises of the Lord.
 Let Ganga and Jamuna flow back to their sources,
 Nama still will not give up worship of Hari.
 The seven hours given by the King had passed,
 Yet the Lord of the Universe had not appeared.
 Lo! There was a sound of wings beating in the air
 Appeared the Lord mounted on Garuda.
 He showed grace to His devotee.
 And came mounted on Garuda.
 Declared the Lord: 'What is thy wish?
 Shall I turn the earth upside down;
 Or lift it and place it above the sky?
 If thou wish, I restore to life the dead cow,
 So all may see and be convinced.'
 Said Nama: 'Spancel^s the cow, '
 The calf was brought and the cow was milked.
 When the pot was filled with milk,
 He brought it and placed before the King.
 Hard was this moment for the King:
 In perplexity he returned into the palace.
 Kazi and Mullah came with word from the King:
 'Hindu, forgive me. I am the cow!'⁶
 Said Nama: 'Listen O King!
 I seek only thy solemn word:
 This word of thine I shall accept—
 Follow ever the path of truth and righteousness!'
 All now were at one with Namdev.
 Hindus all came in a body.

Said they: 'Had the cow not come to life,
Namdev had then lost credit.'

The world praised Nama:

The Lord carried His devotee across the water.

Nama's traducers were unhappy, miserable.

Listen: Nama and the Lord are at one.

(Pp. 1165-66)

NOTES

1. Original, Asopati: Lord of Horses, the Sun-god
2. Mir, Arabic for Lord; Mukand: Emancipator, a title of Krishna
3. Stands for Krishna, whose name signifies this deity as well as God
4. Liberation from transmigration: bliss
5. I have taken this word from Macauliffe.
6. Figuratively an expression of humility

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BABA FARID AS A SYMBOL OF HUMAN BROTHERHOOD*

W.H. McLEOD

Amir Hasan Sijzi records in the *Fawa'id-ul-Fu'ad* an occasion when Baba Farid was offered a pair of scissors. "Give me a needle," said Baba Farid, "I sew; I do not cut."¹ It is an anecdote which effectively expresses the primary significance of the man in whose honour we are gathered here today. Whereas scissors cut and divide, a needle draws together and unites. There are many reasons for the importance of Sheikh Farid, but one of these, I submit, stands out above all others. Sheikh Farid has come to symbolize understanding and tolerance between men of different beliefs and different traditions. It is a symbol which we badly need today and it is the pressure of this contemporary need which above all else justifies a gathering of the kind which has brought us all together at this time. It was, I believe, an admirable decision which led to the organising of this seminar. I should like to add my own word of praise for those who first envisaged it and for those who have in various ways made it possible.

I should also like to add a word of personal thanks to the organisers of the seminar for the gracious invitation which I received to be present at it. In a sense it is an invitation which should properly elicit disapproval, for only the worthy deserve honours of this kind. In another sense, however, it is an invitation which, if one ignores personalities, merits the warmest approval. It was an awareness of this latter aspect which made it possible for me to accept the invitation.

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In explaining what I mean by this latter aspect I find myself immediately involved in the first of the two points which I wish to make during the course of this paper. My first point concerns the importance of Baba Farid for areas beyond his own homeland. For too long the message of Farid has been contained within the confines of India and its neighbours to the immediate west. This ought not to be the case and if the presence at this seminar of a foreigner serves to represent this need, I am only too happy to be present in such a role.

I shall, if I may, speak in somewhat personal terms while dealing with this, the first of my two general points. As some of you may know, I spent nine years in India, living with my family in the Punjab. When the time came for us to leave in 1969, my family shared with me the wrenching experience of departure, and it was then that we discovered what many others have learnt. India, we now know, is an extremely difficult country to leave. It grips one with bonds of ever increasing interest, fascination, personal benefit, and affection, and only when the break has to be made does one realise how strong those bonds can be. The sole consideration which reconciled us to the break was an assurance that it would in no sense be permanent. India would be ever with us, and opportunities to return would certainly recur.

Since leaving I have endeavoured to analyse my response on that occasion and a number of conclusions have emerged. Some of these were easily reached. Plainly we were lamenting the loss of places we had come to know and love so well, an autumn climate which so abundantly compensates for anything the summer may inflict; friends who had shown such understanding towards us, and that splendid generosity which no other part of the world can equal. This much was obvious—but there was more. I had been studying and teaching Punjab history during my years in India and I subsequently realised how meaningful this teaching and research had been in terms of my own personal growth in understanding. This may sound trite. After all, if teaching and research are not meaningful, then why pursue them? It is, however, much more than a mere truism. It is more than a trite commonplace because there is, as I see it, something very special in Indian history.

Let us be clear what we mean by history in this context. There are those who maintain that the only valid reason for a study of any history is the interest which it provides. Respectfully I must disagree. History, as I understand it, has a profound meaning and importance for our own contemporary situation. I am certainly not going to suggest that study of history will provide us with neat models which we simply apply to our contemporary situations, solving thereby present problems with precise prescriptions conveniently served up by the past. What I do suggest is what we can certainly learn from the experience of the past and that the variety of understanding which derives from a study of the past is an essential part of any adequate understanding of the present.

India's history provides us with something special. Because her history is uniquely different the ideals generated by that history are correspondingly unique. Nowhere else can one find the same range and content. This can, of course, be said of any history, but I persist in my insistence that there is nevertheless something of unique value emerging from the history of this particular part of the world.

The declaration towards which I am so ponderously moving is one which many of us hesitate to make because it must so obviously present a target to the scoffer and the cynic. Nevertheless it must be made. It must be made because ideals are, I believe, essential and because we have before us today, in the person of Baba Farid, a particular ideal which the world badly needs. I refer, as you must all by now realise, to that concept of tolerance which emerges in such prominence from successive periods of the Indian historical experience.

Having said this I immediately expose myself to attack from two directions. First there are those who insist that ideals are all very well, but that in practice they are too easily evaded to serve any useful purpose. They serve instead as clocks to conceal violence, fraud, and ordinary human weakness. No one doubts that ideals provide convenient garments for hypocrites, but all men are not total hypocrites and human experience plainly demonstrates that many do in fact respond to high ideal. They who protest the futility of ideals may also include such as respect their noble inten-

tion, but who despair of their fulfilment. To them we must reply that partial fulfilment, however qualified it may be, justifies the existence of an idea and the efforts which men may make to inculcate it.

The second line of attack will come from those who question the special claims made on behalf of the Indian ideal. After all, tolerance is to be found amongst European ideals and if Europeans have done violence to this particular idea, so too have the people of India. The answer to the latter accusation has already been indicated in the claim that an ideal retains its value so long as it secures a partial fulfilment. It is the assertion that European history proffers the same notion of tolerance which constitutes the substance of this second objection. The answer is, I believe, that the western theory of toleration tends to be an essentially negative concept, one which generally assumes the rightness of one's own beliefs and behaviour but which perforce lets the other man go his own way because experience shows that the attempt to impose correction will only lead to conflict.

This is distinctively different from what may be called a theory of positive tolerance and it is, I suggest, the positive theory which one finds enshrined in the Indian ideal. This above all else is what I have in mind when I refer to the special quality of Indian history. It may sound old-fashioned and some may brand it naive. I adhere to it nevertheless.

Let us now take the discussion one step further and ask ourselves how such ideals are in fact communicated to successive generations. The answer is, of course, that they are personified. They are communicated through the lives of men and women who can be seen to express particular ideals in their own lives. Many of these exemplars will be one's own contemporaries, but not all. We also need acknowledged exemplars from the past, men and women who serve as symbols of what a society believes to be good and true.

And so we must ask ourselves who are these individuals who symbolise for us the vital concept of positive tolerance? In this respect I have to acknowledge a particular affection for Guru Nanak, but there are others with special claims and amongst these

we must certainly include Baba Farid.

It is, I believe, a fact that Guru Nanak is much better known to the world outside India than he was four years ago. The occasion of his birth quincentenary was effectively used to present the Guru and his teachings to a wide audience by means of publications, radio talks, and meetings. It is entirely fitting that the same should now be done in the case of Farid, and that the message of tolerance which comes down to us in the person of Baba Farid should be promulgated as widely and as insistently as possible. As with the message of Guru Nanak, it is something which ought not to be confined to that part of the world in which he actually lived. I do not doubt that the message personified in Baba Farid' is profoundly relevant to India's own needs and that this alone would justify the present seminar. It is not, however, my primary concern on this particular occasion. My concern is rather with the universal quality of the message and with the consequent duty to make Baba Farid known beyond the confines of the Indian sub-continent. Many countries suffer the tensions and conflicts which result from mutual misunderstandings between differing groups of people. All such countries need the ideal so convincingly expressed in the traditions which cluster around Baba Farid.

I return again to my own personal experience and with this I conclude the first part of this paper. It is my firm conviction that India has a major contribution to make to international and intercultural understanding. This conviction it makes most effectively through those who personify the concept of positive tolerance — Gandhi, Akbar, Nanak — these names are already well-known. To this list the name of Baba Farid assuredly deserves to be added.

* * * *

I proceed now to the second general point which I wish to make with reference to the significance of Baba Farid as a symbol of human brotherhood. In this paper I have hitherto been stressing the need for high ideals of human brotherhood and the role or function of Baba Farid as an exemplar of these ideals. I also mentioned, in passing, my belief that a sufficient understanding of our present situation necessarily requires a prior understanding of the history which lies behind it. This axiom I now propose to apply to

the history behind our present view and estimate of Baba Farid. For thorough understanding of his contemporary role we need, I submit, an historical perspective. It must be, moreover, an historical perspective of a particular kind.

To some of you these words may sound ominous, coming as they do from one who was the unwitting generator of a recent minor controversy. Let me endeavour, with all speed, to dispel any such fear. It will, I trust, become evident that one result of the controversy has been a much-needed enlarging of my own understanding—a development which apologise for resorting to personal experience and my own individual concerns. I do so partly by way of preliminary reassurance to those who read and remember my book on Guru Nanak; and partly in order to thank those of you who, by means of patient, friendly persuasion, succeeded in broadening a somewhat circumscribed point of view.

When my book *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* appeared five years ago it was criticised by some for its excessively narrow interpretation of historical significance. Tradition (so it was said) has not been accorded its due weight and importance. The biographical portion of the book was exclusively concerned with the factual accuracy of traditional narratives and the burden of emphasis was laid almost exclusively upon a rigorous definition of what "factual accuracy" means. There is, I still believe, a place for this particular approach and even if *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* served no other purpose, it did at least stimulate much valuable comment from those who could perceive its shortcomings. It is, however, a comparatively minor role which it fulfils, one which does little more than prepare the way for studies of greater depth and value. Let us now seek to define an approach to history and tradition more profound in terms of its understanding of the part and more relevant to our own contemporary situation. And let us do so with special reference to Baba Farid.

You will, of course, marvel at the naive optimism with which I so grandly declare the intention of defining in a few short minutes, the meaning of history and tradition. Needless to say, one can hope to do no more than initiate a discussion. This is all I should want to do, for plainly I have neither the time nor the knowledge to

provide anything resembling a complete answer to the questions which I pose. For your consideration I shall offer definitions of two closely related aspects of historical interpretation. Both aspects I shall seek to exemplify with reference to Baba Farid.

The first of my two definitions can be covered quickly. It is, in a sense, no more than a statement of the obvious and yet it is one which assuredly needs frequent repetition. The actual pattern of so much historical research and writing makes this abundantly clear. Historical research certainly involves the uncovering of facts about the past, but no event, no episode, no statistic possesses any intrinsic importance. Events are important only in relation to other events. This importance they manifest is the consequence of prior circumstance and the creators of the future. From this axiom many corollaries follow. The one which I am concerned to emphasise at this point is that history always has a future importance. In other words, the significance of a particular event concerns not merely the point in time at which it occurs, but also the future which it affects. It is in this sense that all periods are the products of their past and precisely in this sense that any understanding of our present circumstances demands a requisite knowledge of the past which has produced them.

All that one may say about events in this respect must also be said about historical personages. Whatever interest any particular person may possess when studied within his own period, and however vital this may be for any understanding of that person, his actual importance — *his impact* — is always a future phenomenon. This claim is, I fully recognise, open to both historical and philosophical objections but these can, I believe, be answered.

Baba Farid and our presence here today serve to illustrate my point. Most assuredly an understanding of Baba Farid involves a careful investigation of the man Shaikh Farid in the twelfth and thirteenth century circumstances of Delhi, Hansi and Pak Pattan. One must investigate the economic, social and political conditions of northern India during that period. One must acquire as deep a knowledge as possible of the Sufi beliefs and customs of the period; and having sought to authenticate works attributed to Shaikh Farid, one must carefully scrutinize those which survive the process of authentication.

All this is absolutely vital and may the work begun in these areas be pursued with all possible vigour! It is not, however, the end of the historian's responsibility as far as Baba Farid is concerned. It is merely the beginning. It does no more than provide essential basic knowledge for research of greater significance. What was the impact of Farid upon subsequent generations? And (most important of all) how are we to interpret his impact upon the present? This is the obligation imposed by the first of my two definitions, the claim that historical importance always has a future reference and that in consequence the historian's responsibility always stretches forward to the present.

Many historians dispute this concern with the present, insisting rather that history must be studied "for its own sake" (whatever that means) or simply as a humanitarian discipline. I fully and vigorously support the value of history as a humanitarian discipline, but with equal vigour I should dispute any suggestion that its justification proceeds no further. It has, I maintain, a direct and vital relevance to the present and all competent historians, whether consciously or not, are serving this need. One should add, of course, that those who serve it consciously, normally increase thereby their effectiveness as historians. It is this dual approach which should, I submit, inform the historian's interest in Baba Farid as in other historical personages possessing this future significance. It may be noted at this point that the case of Baba Farid convincingly demolishes the claims of those who maintain, directly or by obvious implication, that the needs of present relevance are sufficiently met by studying only the recent past. Our present situation is not the creation of the past hundred years alone and any decision to concentrate largely upon this period must distort our understanding. To understand the present, one must pursue strands which stretch well beyond the last century, and it is one such strand which leads us directly to the person of Baba Farid. A pursuit of this kind can communicate very little if we sever the strand at an arbitrary mark labelled 1850 or 1800. I speak at this point not so much with reference to India as to some other countries where the entirely proper notion of relevance has been misapplied by exponents with little understanding of what history really means.

We come now to the second of the definitions which I wish to offer with regard to historical interpretation in general and Baba Farid in particular. The first definition concerned the future importance of men and events in history. The second concerns the manner in which past events and personages are apprehended by future generations, and the historian's responsibility as an interpreter of this ever-evolving apprehension. The past does not operate mechanically upon its future, at least not in the sense which assumes a progression of simple cause and direct effect. The past is subject to constant evaluation and interpretation by each succeeding period. It is refracted through the understanding of successive generations, and in the process is inevitably distorted by whatever is meant by forty days; whether his performance extended over the complete period or was limited to the hours of darkness; whether it was in fact *namaz-i-mukus* lasting six months or even ten years; or whether the story is a pious legend with no factual basis. The debate is legitimate and indeed necessary, but it is not the principal issue of importance. The principal question concerns the belief of subsequent generations. Was this story generally believed or was it consciously circulated by the authors of *Malfuzat* as a known legend? There can be no doubt that many successive generations genuinely believed one or other of the *makus* traditions and that we can in consequence affirm the following important fact: many generations of admirers of Baba Farid believed that he performed the discipline of inverted meditation in an Uch well.

In one sense this statement may possibly incorporate a falsehood. This would be the case if someone could demonstrate that Baba Farid never went near the Uch well. It would not, however, affect either the truth or the importance of the statement itself, and having ascertained its truth we must proceed to elicit its importance. In general terms the importance is, I suggest, the testimony which the tradition bears to the value so insistently attached to ascetic observance. In specific terms it affirms the authority accorded to Farid by future generations as a master of the ascetic discipline.

Because this particular episode commanded such interest it attracted to itself other traditions, an interesting example being the

story of how the Bhandari Khatri received their name. According to Lepel Griffin's account a wealthy adventurer visited Pak Pattan to seek from Baba Farid the blessing which would bring him a son. When he arrived there, he found that the Shaikh had been hanging suspended for so long that his followers (who depended upon his miracles for their sustenance) were all starving. Rai Bhag Mal provided both food and housing for a period of nine years until eventually Farid terminated his *namaz-i-makus* and emerged from the well. Because Rai Bhag Mal had proved to be such a devoted provider, the name *bhandari* (steward) was bestowed upon him.³

It makes little difference whether Rai Bhag Mal ever visited Shaikh Farid, and if so, whether the well was in Uch or Pak Pattan. The importance of the tradition lies in the implicit conviction that Baba Farid was a master-ascetic. It is indisputably a fact that this and other allied traditions have been widely believed for many centuries. With equal firmness it can be affirmed that the traditions which concern Farid's ascetic prowess demonstrate widespread popular support for a continuing acceptance of the merit of asceticism. At the same time they serve to sustain that acceptance.

On the basis of the Uch anecdote we may thus affirm a brief series of important facts concerning subsequent generations. Its value as a conveyor of accurate information is not, however, limited to later generations. With due caution it is possible to work back from an anecdote of this kind to an affirmation which concerns the historical Farid rather than his later image. Let us assume what is, I believe, entirely amenable to historical proof, namely that Baba Farid was in fact a true ascetic. This fact has depended for its preservation upon the form in which it has been transmitted. Who can doubt that it would have been forgotten had it been confined to a simple statement, a disembodied affirmation. It has not, however, been transmitted a mere declaration. It descends to us embodied in a cluster of anecdotes.

It was, I suggest, only the anecdotal form which could discharge the essential preservative function for most of those who over so many generations have cherished the name and reputation of Baba Farid. The sophisticated may scoff, but if so, they betray

a lamentable want of understanding. The fact must be personified that this function the anecdote form serves with unique success. The actual story need not be historically accurate in order to communicate an authentic fact (in this particular case an affirmation of Baba Farid's ascetic achievement). The form within which it is expressed is at once its vehicle and its protection. As an anecdote, pithy and memorable, it is afforded a permanence which it would otherwise lack.

Having thus introduced questions of truth as opposed to falsehood, or accuracy as opposed to error, let us return to the question for a second definition. This definition, you will recollect, is to discern the apprehension of information derived from the cause, the manner in which it is perceived and expressed by people as social groups rather than by fastidiously academic historians.

During the last few minutes I have been suggesting, with reference to the Uch anecdote, that truth can be communicated at two different levels regardless of whether or not the story of Baba Farid's inverted sojourn in the well is factually true. It is precisely this kind of claim which can, I believe, be explained and justified by the definition which I am about to offer. Before offering it, however, I must cause yet another brief delay by introducing a key-word. The word is one which properly explained and understood can, I believe, greatly aid our grasp of historical meaning. It is, however, a word which runs obvious risks of misunderstanding. For this reason I have hitherto hesitated to use it in anything I have written, and for the same reason I preface its introduction with this elaborate warning.

The word is "myth", and having thus introduced it, let me plead with you to suspend as far as possible, whatever associations it may have evoked. Let me insist at the very outset that I do not use "myth" as a synonym for "legend" nor for anything resembling it. In the usage which I observe they are plainly distinct in nature. The word "legend" designates, as I understand it, a story which is not true. It may be popularly credited with factual truth, but upon examination it turns out never to have happened. Let it be clearly understood that when employing this term "legend" we are concerned with the actual events recorded by the narrative which

we label legendary, not with its meaning nor with its function. It is unhistorical narrative as opposed to historical.

"Myth" represents something distinctively different from those two opposites, and it is a declaration of the difference which brings us, at long last, to the definition I have been promising. For historians, I suggest, the term "myth" may properly be used to designate an interpretation of the past based upon the needs and understanding of the present. For its actual content it may draw from either legend or from authentic factual history. Most myths generated within societies which are at least partially literate, partake of the two and offer blends of both the legendary and the factual. There is, however, no reason why a myth should not be wholly based upon fact. It is the interpretation or message which constitutes the myth, and for this purpose the actual components may come from either source. The two essential qualifications are first, that the resultant myth should be functional; and secondly that it should command acceptance. A myth forfeits a significant measure of its strength when it loses its historical credibility. It becomes instead a fable and although fables may be used to communicate important truths, they lack the compelling power of the accepted myth. This is particularly the case in literate societies.

The meaning which I here attach to the word "myth" is well exemplified by the Black Hole of Calcutta. In this famous example we have all the important components of a historical myth. We have a situation which gives rise to the myth, we have the blending of both fact and legend; we have a credibility extending over a period of one hundred years; and we have the eventual lapse of the myth as it loses its function. The situation which gave it birth was not that of the mid-eighteenth century, but rather that which obtained almost a century later. British activities in India had grown from peripheral trade to extensive conquest and as Britain moved into its Victorian period there developed an increasing need to legitimise the British presence in India. Legitimacy could no longer be justified in terms of the essential imposition of order by a civilized nation upon an area which would otherwise be rent by disorder.

It was to this need that the myth of the Black Hole spoke with such insistent relevance. Siraj-ud-daulah represented the forces

of barbarism and the episode of June 1756 exemplified the violence which was its inevitable outcome. Bereft of British authority and administration India would be a prey to disorders of this kind. Englishmen believed this to be a fact because such episodes as the Black Hole seemed to prove it.

Incidents of this kind have occurred hundreds of times without securing more than a footnote in history. The difference is that they did not serve the same compelling need as the Black Hole and in consequence were never elevated to the status of myth. It is highly significant that this particular incident went largely unnoticed for half a century and did not achieve real prominence until another half-century had passed. The later situation produced a particular need and, a grossly exaggerated account of a comparatively minor event helped to meet the need. Further assistance was provided by eliciting the same myth from the events of 1857-58. Later still under appropriately altered situations we have the growth of a counter-myth in which the roles are reversed. This finds its most convincing expression in the Jallianwala Bagh episode. The facts may or may not all be true. For the future what really matter is the interpretation, an interpretation which emerges unconsciously.

Let us now return to Baba Farid and see if this model aids our understanding of the Farid of history. I submit that it does. It helps us to see that the future impact of Farid is to be understood in terms of the myth which he has generated. Were this myth to be weak or totally absent it could only mean that this impact had been negligible beyond his own immediate environment and we should not be gathered here today. We know that the myth has been drawn from the authentic life of Farid, and we know also that it incorporates legendary elements. Neither is critical. An excess of legendary content may damage the credibility of the myth, but it does not affect its meaning and it leaves open for each succeeding generation the question of whether that meaning is true or false, relevant or irrelevant. Later generations have remembered Farid not because he worked wonders or because he enjoyed a considerable following during his own day. They have remembered him because the message which he has come to symbolise is one which speaks of the needs of every generation. It is for this reason that it

survives today. Far from being the transient interest of a foreign conqueror it is the universal and permanent concern of all mankind which finds expression in the remembered person of Baba Farid.

Is the myth true? In an ultimate sense it depends upon the judgement of each man. We know that it has drawn substantially from the authentic life of Shaikh Farid and we know also that it incorporates legendary elements. Together these impart a credibility and a vigour which do much to explain its later impact, but they neither prove nor disprove the ultimate truth. The answer to this question is one which each of us must give within the context of our own contemporary society. Personally I believe that its truth and its continuing relevance is plainly stated in the quotation with which I began and with which I now conclude. "I sew, I do not cut." Who can doubt that in a world-sundered by distinctions of race, custom, and belief the message of positive tolerance is absolutely vital. Baba Farid embodies that message and it is a message which must be heeded if there is to be healing amongst men.

NOTES

1. Khaliq Ahmed Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Farid-u'd Din Ganj-i-Shakar* (Aligarh, 1955) p. 89
2. Ibid, pp. 25-26
3. Lepel G. Griffin, *The Panjab Chiefs* (Lahore, 1865) pp. 268-69

RADICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF ST KABIR*

SEHDEV KUMAR

Fifteenth century Indian poet-sage Kabir is one of the most significant figures in the world mystical literature. As a sage, Kabir's great spiritual insights referred to the inner journey of man. But Kabir was never unaware of the trials and tribulations of his own community and times. He commented on every aspect of his social life with ardent lucidity and concern. As such Kabir's position is unique amongst the Indian spiritual figures.

According to an Indian legend, the *hans*, a swan, is endowed with a special gift of separating the milk from water, and thus discerning the real from the unreal. When the waves in the ocean strike against the shore, it is believed that the swan dives in search for the pearls while a *bagulā*, a crane, is content looking for the fish.

Fifteenth century Indian sage-poet Kabir was one such swan seeking to distinguish the real from the illusory. But like all such swans, Kabir resided and moved amongst the cranes, and to the uninitiated was often indistinguishable from them:

What a mire
The world is lost in
It doesn't know
A saint
From a charlatan
O my brother
Just because
Someone has collected
A group of followers,
Does that make him
A holy man?¹

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For some five centuries, Kabir's has been a noble and unique presence that has embraced, with an unparalleled intensity, the entire spectrum of life in India, temporal and spiritual alike. That is why for the Indians, Kabir is all things to all men; for the socially-concerned, troubled as they are by the pain and suffering of millions of their people, Kabir is a revolutionary who sang against the tyranny of the powerful and the privileged; for the down-trodden and the oppressed, Kabir is a *Mahātmā*—like Gandhi—who spoke in their own tongue against the morass of *untouchability*. For a spiritual seeker, Kabir is a great Yogi, a *Sat Puruṣ* who shines like a beacon in the blinding storm. For men of letters, Kabir is a poet par excellence, the like of whom 'in a thousand years of Hindi literature, there has not been quite another'.² Hailed as an *avatār*, the incarnate of the Supreme Being, and an 'Indian Luther', a Christian 'influenced by the writings of St. John',³ there are universal attempts by all religious groups to claim Kabir to be one of their own: Muslims remember him as *Kabir Shah*—'the great king'; in fact *Al Kabir* is one of the ninety-nine names given to God in Koran. Hindus often call him *Kabir-dās*; *dās* means 'the holy servant'. The Sikhs and *Kabir-panthis*, 'followers of Kabir' remember him as *Kabir Sahib*—'master Kabir'. He is also called *Bābājī*. *Kabir-bābā* is a familiar appellation for a man of knowledge. For the Sufis, Kabir is a *Pīr*; for the Vaisnavas a *bhakta*; for contemporary Indians, he is an enlightened man whose vision is not marred by orthodoxy or dogma, and is as vibrant today as it has always been.⁴ Indeed no Indian mystic has ever earned so much attention and lavish praise from as many varied groups and communities as Kabir.⁵

Kabir was born and brought up in a community of weavers. As a weaver, according to the prevailing social hierarchy of his times, Kabir was a *śūdra*—the lowest caste that also comprised such other artisans as potters, dyers, cobblers, *telīs* and the like. The *śūdras* were slightly higher than the outcastes, such as scavengers, butchers and those who dealt with animal hides. But all of them were treated by the higher castes, particularly the Brahmans, as 'untouchables' and were ostracized from all social and religious intercourse.⁶

As a weaver, life for Kabir was hard, and he suffered deprivation all through his life. Attraction to matters of spiritual concern, however, was evident early in his youth. And although Kabir never became a professional ascetic and instead followed his vocation of weaving all along, there was in him a certain melancholy and aloofness from worldly pursuits. In his verses there is not a trace of material ambition; as a true Yogi, he lived like a player on a stage, playing his role with diligence but never mistaking it for 'real'. Thus like Tersteegen the ribbon-maker, Boehme the cobbler, Bunyan the tinker and Paul the tentmaker, Kabir worked on the loom; his hands assisting rather than hindering the 'impasioned meditation of his heart.'⁷

Everywhere on the path
The pearls are scattered
Yet the blind men don't notice them
O seeker
Without the inner light
Who can find his way
Out of the labyrinth?⁸

At the age of twenty, Kabir is said to have achieved *mokṣa* and seen the Face of the Beloved. In his *awakened* state, Kabir sang of love and truth with such forthrightness that it disturbed the well-entrenched religious establishment of his day to no end.

In every city
There are hordes of *pandits*,
In every place, there is
many a man who carries
The burden of scholarship;
The forests are swarming with ascetics
But O Brother
The real seekers of knowledge
There are none.⁹

* * *

Passion, anger, agitation, avarice
So long as one is possessed by them,
O my friend
There is little distinction
Between a fool and a scholar.¹⁰

Kabir's iconoclastic proclamations and his satirical dismissal of all rituals and ceremonies that intervened between the soul and

its seeking as meaningless, were soon to rock the Hindu and Muslim priesthood of Kashi. Numerous attempts are said to have been made to harass and malign Kabir; charges were finally laid against him before the city's Muslim administrator and judge, the *Qāzī*. Accused of fomenting sedition, Kabir was imprisoned, and was later brought in chains before the Sultan Sikandar Lodi. But earthly kings and emperors meant little to Kabir; he is said to have refused to bow before the Sultan. Kabir was condemned to death. According to the legend, however, all three attempts to execute the sentence failed; and he was instead exiled from the holy city of Kashi.

In exile, as an apostle and poet of love, he roamed amongst his people like a wandering minstrel, singing of the *Beloved the Light within, the Flight of the Swan*. In 1518, still in exile and revered by everyone, the Hindus and the Muslims alike, he breathed his last in the town of Maghar. Even in his last days, he refused to return to Kashi thus defying the ancient Hindu belief that one who dies in the holy city is destined for heaven:

O Brother

For him who understands

Kashi and Maghar are just the same¹¹

* * *

If God resides everywhere

How can there be heaven and hell?

How does one go to one or the other?

O seeker, only the ignorant

Talk of heaven and hell.

One who understands.

For him,

There is Nothing Nothing.¹²

At his death, both Hindus and Muslims claimed him to be one of their saints and thus wished to perform the last rites according to their own customs, the Hindus planning to cremate the body and the Muslims to bury it. The legend has it that when they removed the shroud, there was nothing to be found except a heap of flowers.

Such an end, surrounded in romantic mystery though it is, seems like most befitting tribute to a man who, all his life, refused to be pinned down to any dogma or creed. And who has, in all these centuries, continued to emanate so much fragrance through

his divine presence and exquisite verses!

As a sage, Kabir saw much beyond the limited perceptions that so bind us in our ordinary states of consciousness. As though the spectrum of light that touched his *eye* was far greater than what does ours. In his verses, there is an ever-pervasive sense of transcendence, of *The Other Shore*, *The Unstruck Music*, *The Invisible River*. Yet for all these, Kabir is deeply rooted in his own times and the soil that so nourished him. His metaphors and allegories, his satire—for which he is so well known—and his teachings, and his concerns and yearnings reflect a man who is as intensely alive to the trials and tribulations of the people of his class and caste as he is to the joys and ecstasies of eternity. Kabir, in fact, seems to reside in some illuminated commonplace, since all aspects of the universe command for him the same sacramental quality as he sees the presence of the *holy* everywhere.

In Kabir thus one discovers the most remarkable synthesis of a social and cultural rebel and a spiritual seeker. Responding to it all with the wisdom and command of a sage and a heretic, in his verses, Kabir's transcendental vision takes full measure of the turbulence of his age.

Much though Kabir synthesized concepts and rites from many different sects and religions, he had an uncanny sense to distinguish the real from the apparent. For him, the miracles of the *Yogis* or the *Pirs*, or the high-sounding philosophical abstractions of *Pandits* or the *Sheikhs*, all were a form of self-delusion. And thus anything or anyone who darkened the face of Reality through charlatanism or cleverness, dogma or habit, stood exposed in the brilliant light of Kabir's vision:

Look at him, the Yogi
 How he has dyed his attire
 And yet not a drop of love has touched him.
 With pierced ears, and a long beard,
 How like a goat he looks!
 Reciting the *Gītā*
 An empty, endless chatterer!¹³

* * *

There are thousands of scriptures
 But all useless
 Take my word:

Throw them into a well
 O seeker, he who is not free himself
 How can he talk of freedom to others?¹⁴

In the holy city of Kashi, Kabir must have been well aware of the various rituals and rites that were an integral part of Hinduism. Sectarian warfares — some fortified with guns and canon—and endless scriptural debates were as prevalent in his times as idol-worship and a blind faith in numerous gods and goddesses.¹⁵ Kabir observed them all as acutely as any student of society might:

In this city, there are many men—
 Some scholars of the *Vedas*
 Some steeped in melancholy.
 There are ascetics
 and there are hedonists
 Some are given to alcohol
 Some to mind-altering drugs.
 There are *siddhas*
 and there are pilgrims
Sāddus, *Pirs* and *Yogis*
 Brahmins, priests and *pandās*
 Alas, all lost in the webs of *māyā*
 Unaware! Unconscious!¹⁶

* * *

Ah, the city of lost men!
 In the name of the Lord
 there is many a sect
 And there are many
 who proclaim themselves
 as men of wisdom;
 They have shops and
 they have *bazaars*
 where they display and sell
 their spiritual wares
 And where, on occasion,
 They confront each other
 with guns and with cannon.
 Ah, the city of lost men!
 O Kabir
 What gods have guns?
 What cannon?
 Who are these ascetics
 with thrones of gold
 And hordes of horses and elephants,

under their command?
 Mere mortal men
 Lost in the webs of illusion.¹⁷

To men and women, with rosaries in their hands, Kabir invoked:

Leave aside the heads
 Open your hands;
 Let the heart turn!¹⁸

* * *

At the holy bathing places
 There is nothing but water
 O Brother, it cleanses not, I tell you
 For I have bathed there;
 The idols are made merely of clay
 They speak not, believe me,
 For I have cried out to them.
 The Purāns and the Korān,
 O seeker, are only words,
 They reveal not,
 For lifting up the curtain
 I have seen.

Truth is to be experienced. O Kabir
 All else is a mere shadow.¹⁹

To ascetics, given to mortification, Kabir's message was simple and direct:

By merely imitating its sounds
 And without understanding the essence
 A crow does not become a swan!²⁰

To the naked mendicants, *the nāgā sādhus* who frequented the holy bathing places, Kabir said:

If by going naked,
 One could achieve liberation,
 The pigs and the dogs
 should be the first ones to receive it. ²¹

* * *

If by shaving one's head
 One could become holy
 How easy would it all be.
 See how often a sheep is shorn
 Yet how far from heaven it is.²²

To the Brahmans, lost in the endless practices of untouchability and ritualistic purifications, he said:

O Brahmans, tell me how does a man
 become an *untouchable*?²³
 Like all beings, he was conceived and nursed
 in the womb of his mother,
 Like all beings, he came into the world,
 glorious and innocent:
 Then what has polluted him? I ask you.
 O Brother, from One Light,
 all has come to be,
 Who is a Brahman?
 Who is an *untouchable*?

* * *

O Pandit
 You are a Brahman
 I am merely a weaver,
 How can our paths meet!
 I shall cross the ocean by invoking His name,
 But you will drown with
 the weight of the scriptures.²⁴

* * *

If you are so holy, O Brahman
 Why do you feed on the poor
 by your lowly tactics?
 Why do you invoke the fear of hell
 and of cold, moonless nights?
 Why do you pretend to hold a lamp
 in your hand
 And yet walk into the ditch?²⁵

For Kabir, the mark of a 'good' man was not his wealth or his caste, nor his learning or his profession, but the level of his spiritual evolution. The former were merely masks: the real worth was determined by how well one understood what was within:

Not the caste of the seeker
 But his knowledge
 You must ascertain
 O Brother
 Judge ye not
 The splendour of the sheath
 But the sharpness of the sword!²⁶

A snake, the popular saying has it, sheds its skin, not its poison. Kabir dismissed all 'tinkering with the skin' as inessential

and entirely irrelevant to the spiritual journey. He invoked all to move away from feeding the ego to nourishing the Self. In such an endeavour, there was no need to 'shout the name of Allah like a hawker; God is not deaf. He can hear the footsteps of even an ant in the forest.'²⁷

Neither mortification nor the indulgence of the flesh were the ways of Kabir. He spoke of both of these extremes with a certain disdain, and instead advocated the middle path, the path of 'detached pleasure':

Music is imbued with melancholy
And sorrow is filled with music
So too, O Seeker
An ascetic may be possessed of avarice
And a householder be free of all things.²⁸

What Kabir seems to reject is not pleasure but pretension; the pretension of 'holiness' is no different for him from pretension of hedonism. What he wishes to remove is the veil of illusion, to burn down the house of *māyā*, to free our self from ourselves:

I have set my house on fire
As I carry this flame of Love
O seeker, if you choose to follow me
Be warned:
I shall burn your house to ashes too.²⁹

For many in India, Kabir stands as an ardent opponent of idol-worship:

If by worshipping a stone-idol
One could see the face of the Lord
One might as well
Worship a mountain
Or better still
Why not a grind-stone?
It grinds the grain
And feeds the world.³⁰

There are many even today who respond to Kabir's criticism of idol-worship as lacking full understanding. If God is omnipresent, as Kabir believed, then, they argue, he could be meditated upon in any form, as much in an idol as in a tree.

Such a point of view is not without merit, and Kabir was not oblivious of it. Apart from the gross misuse of idol-worship, not as a means of meditation but as a distraction, Kabir saw it, as he did

other external observances, as an escape from Reality that lay within oneself. Once one understood that Reality, then the entire universe expressed its presence, the idol included. But until that moment of awakening, the idol helped little, if at all:

O friend
I went seeking Him
All over the earth
Wandering in distant lands
But the moment I found Him
My own courtyard became the universe.³¹

In a similar context, the testimony of 19th century Indian mystic Sri Ramakrishna is exquisite:

Formal worship drops away after the vision of God. It was then that my worship in the temple came to an end. I used to worship Deity in the Kali Temple. It was suddenly revealed to me that everything is Pure Spirit. The utensils of worship, the altar, the door-frame—all Pure Spirit. Men, animals and other living beings—all Pure Spirit. Then like a mad man I began to shower flowers in all directions. Whatever I saw I worshipped.³²

It has been said that 'no greater writer of satire has existed in Hindi literature than Kabir.'³³ Yet the sense of irony and the terseness of expression that prevail in Kabir's words are that of a teacher, a Master, whose calling it is to awaken us from our slumber. When we bloat ourselves with scholarship and intellectual aridity, he cautions us that we are no more than a 'donkey carrying a load of sandalwood', who appreciates little of its fragrance.

For all his rejection of the *book*, the idol and the rituals, Kabir is not a nihilist. Far from it. As he ridiculed all observances that distracted one from the spiritual journey, he recognized in them the inevitable temptations that the human spirit succumbs to. His satire is not that of a cynic but of a man who understands human folly, yet the reach of whose vision is not circumscribed by it. Yet, however scathing Kabir's words may be, they are never bitter. There is not a trace of meanness about them, nor arrogance. He is so certain of his understanding, so elevated in his stature, so humble in his seeking and so confident of his path that in him, satire has a serenity of its own, and its child-like simplicity is utterly disarming.

In Kabir's time, on a cultural plane there was a certain coming together of the Hindus and the Muslims. However, in social

and political spheres, the distrust and the strife between the two communities continued to flourish. Kabir was a Muslim weaver but was born, perhaps, of Hindu parents. He was a *śūdra* but had a Brahman guru. His teachings and allegories seem to derive as much from Vaisnavism and Vedanta as from Sufism. His imagery alludes to the Upanisads no less than it does to the common work-a-day events. In short, Kabir stands in the midst of many cultures and many religions, 'collecting nectar from all flowers.'

For the modern Indians, Kabir stands as an 'apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity', and as a champion of the oppressed and the poor, specifically the *untouchables*. For Mahatma Gandhi, in particular, Kabir was *patron saint* of religious harmony and social justice.

As a man with a synthetic vision that proclaimed Rama and Allah as One, and as one who sang of the unity of all things, Kabir is certainly all that his admirers claim him to be. But that was not all that he was. For all his intense concern for the oppressed and the exploited, and his dismissal of the struggles between the Hindus and Muslims as political extravaganza that has little to do with religion, Kabir was not a 'social reformer' or a 'revolutionary', as the terms are generally understood. Even when he was addressing the *pandits* or the *mullās*, he was, in truth, only invoking his fellow-seekers, the *sādhaks*, to reform and transform. This personal turning over for him was the basis of all social reform, not the other way round. Obviously he didn't, in any active manner, work towards bringing about any social change, *per se*. Nor is any significant social change known to have occurred in his times.

By 'Hindu-Muslim unity', it was generally understood to mean a mutual respect for the customs, rituals and beliefs of both religions. In view of the tensions that have prevailed between these two religious groups for centuries, such an ecumenical attitude would undoubtedly seem a valuable social ethic. But to consider Kabir as its apostle would tend to diminish the extent of his vision. Kabir, in fact, had an aversion to all customs and rituals conducted in the name of God and religion. And the scriptures, of whatever authority, and their endless recitation seemed to him inane and not the path to freedom:

The god of Hindus resides in a temple;

The god of Muslims resides in a mosque.

Who resides there

Where there are no temples

No mosques?

O seeker, follow your own path

Forget the mosque, forget the temple

Be your own light

Open your eyes and see

that Rāma and Allāh are One.³⁴

Kabir declared himself to be 'at once the child of Allah and of Rama!' But he insisted:

Neither a Hindu nor a Muslim am I

A mere ensemble of five elements,

it is this body,

Where the spirit plays its drama

Of joy and suffering.³⁵

Kabir proclaimed over and over again that 'God was neither in Kailāsh nor in Kaabā ... neither in the Purānas nor in the Korān... I say He is everywhere. But, *O pandit*, you keep hiding him in the Book...' ³⁶

Yet perhaps the most luminous verse of Kabir is the one in which he transcends the distinction even between the sacred and the profane:

Neither pious nor defiled am I

I neither deny nor indulge my senses

A master or a servant, I am not.

Neither bound nor free

Neither attached nor detached am I.

Close to all yet far from everyone

Neither heaven nor hell do I wish for

But I am possessed by nothing.³⁷

Kabir sang against oppression of every kind, and for the eternally good and the harmonious. Yet he never ceased to point at the transcendental Truth that was beyond good and evil, sin and virtue, beautiful and ugly: beyond all the boundaries and social concerns of man. 'O Brother, what is good? What is bad?' he asked. 'They are all reflections of the same Light.'³⁸

The Lord resides in us all

Like the life that is in every seed.

O friend, don't be vain,

Look within:

A million suns are ablaze there,
 And oceans and the heavens are all aglow.
 Make your self at home,
 And all your suffering will vanish.
 The unstruck music shall burst forth
 And love would permeate everywhere.
 Without water rains will pour,
 And pearls would fill the rivers!
 O dear friend, love throbs
 In all corners of the universe
 Open your eyes and see.
 Not through the eyes of reason;
 For they see only separation and distinction
 Blind they are who sit
 In the house of logic and intellect,
 O Kabir, how blessed am I,
 I sing joyously within my own vessel,
 Of the divinity of all things.³⁹

NOTES

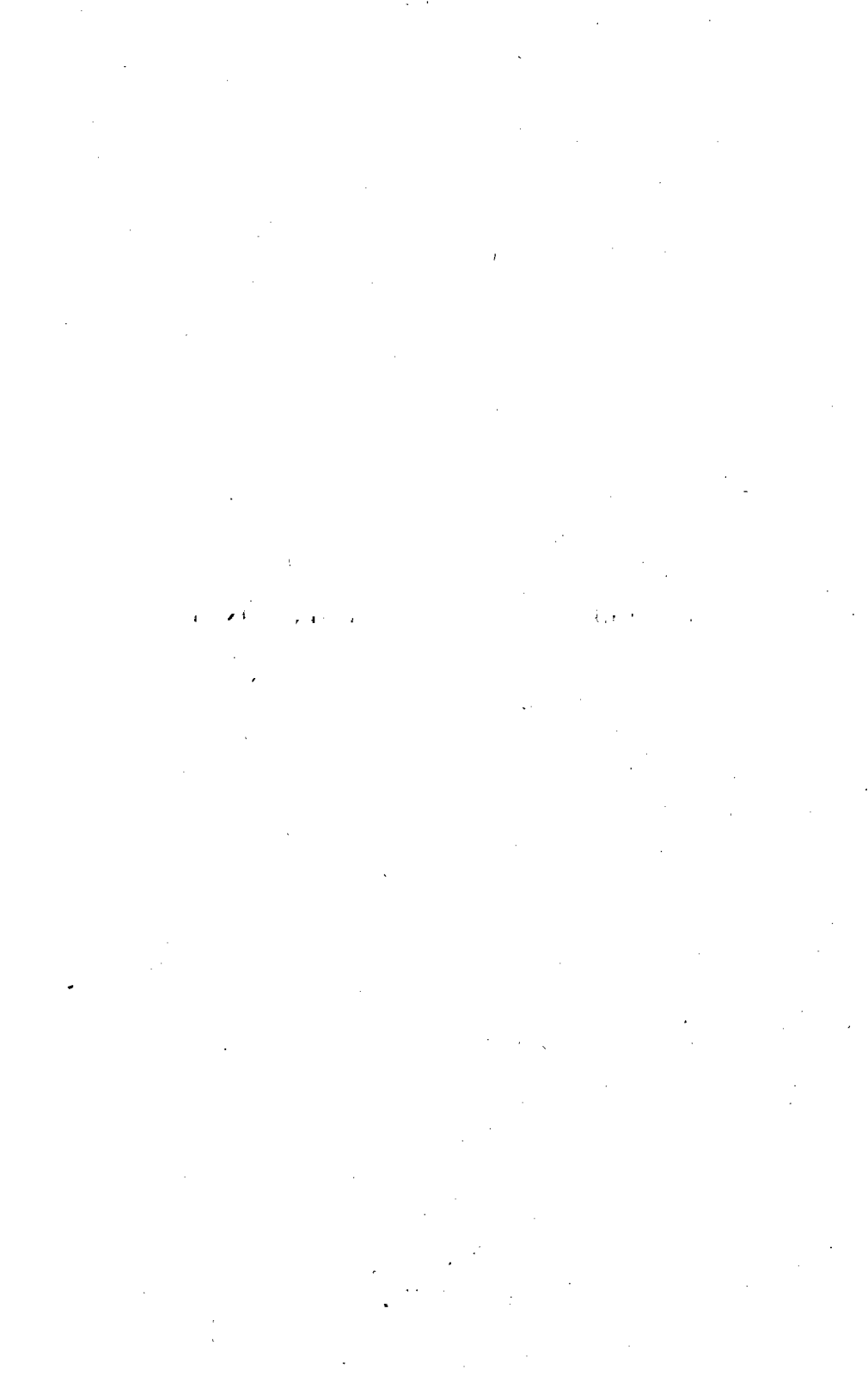
1. *Sakhi* IV. 4 in Sehdev Kumar's *The Vision of Kabir*, Delhi, Motilal Banarasidass, 1984. All translations presented here are by the author.
2. H.P. Divedi, *Kabir*, 4th ed., Bombay, 1953, p. 217.
3. The study of the influence of Christian beliefs—brought to India by the Nestorians at an early date—upon Indian Bhakti has a fairly long and varied history. Cf. Ch. Vaudeville, *Kabir*, Vol. I, Oxford, 1974, pp. 10-15. In particular about Kabir, several Christian missionaries, both of Indian and European origin, saw an unmistakable Christian ring in his utterances. In the preface to his *Bijak*, Calcutta, 1890, Revd. Prem Chand, a Baptist missionary in Bengal, writes that Kabir 'had some knowledge of Christian truth, which made him think of the brotherhood of man... that some of his moral teachings correspond with the teachings of Bible.' In an article, 'Modern Hinduism and its Debt to the Nestorians', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1907, p. 311, the great linguist G. Grierson, writes: 'Kabir's doctrine of the word (Śabda) is a remarkable copy of the opening verses of St. John's Gospel.' In *Kabir and the Kabir-Panth*, Kanpur, 1907, p. 90, Bishop Westcott writes about 'the doctrine of Shabda': 'It is not improbable this doctrine, as set forth in the literature of the Kabir-Panth, has been influenced by the writings of St. John.' Another Christian missionary, Revd. Ahmed Shah, in his translation of the *The Bijak of Kabir*, Hamirpur, 1917, refers to the 'religious toleration and the brotherhood of mankind' (p. 36) that Kabir propagated. However,

he refrains from suggesting any direct Christian influence on these ideas and instead underscores Kabir's originality in the context of his immediate Hindu-Muslim context: 'Though thoughts resembling his are to be found in the writings of the Hindu philosophers, and especially in the Muslim Sufis of all ages, yet the presentation of them is peculiarly his own'. (p. 35)

4. This is perhaps most eloquently summed up by G. Grierson:
'What a wonderful man Kabir must have been! A lowly Muslim weaver who by a stratagem gained accession to a Vaisnava community—universally despised and hated by both Mussalman and Hindu, maltreated by the Muslim emperor and persecuted by the Brahminhood of Banaras—With unparalleled audacity he dared to set himself face to face against both Islam and Hinduism, the two religions of the 15th century India, and won through. Each he attacked in its tenderest point—its shibboleths and its rituals— and over both he rode triumphant, teaching and converting thousands who became his devoted followers. Not only did he find an eclectic monotheism that survives in India to the present day, but he became the spiritual father of Nanak who founded Sikhism...'
5. British scholar J.N. Farquhar has remarked about Kabir: 'His best utterances are probably the loftiest work in the Hindi language: and hundreds of his couplets have laid hold of the common heart of Hindustan.'
J.N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, repr. Delhi, 1967, p. 333.
6. Cf. R.C. Tiwari, *Kabir-Mimansa*, Allahabad, 1976, pp. 9-14.
7. Rabindranath Tagore, *Songs of Kabir*, Introduction by E. Underhill, New York, 1974, p. 13.
8. Sakhi X. 2, *The Vision of Kabir*, *op. cit.* All references to the *Sakhis* are in this volume.
9. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 128
10. *Sakhi* VI. 5
11. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 131
12. *Ibid.*, p. 131
13. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 271; Tagore, *op. cit.*, p. 109
14. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 35
15. For details, see Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-31; R.C. Tiwari, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-14
16. Based on *Padas* 386 and 187 in *Kabir Granthavali*, ed. S.S. Das, Kashi, 15th edition, sa 2036
17. Based on *Ramaini* 69 in Jaidev Singh and Vasudev Singh, *Kabir Vanmay* : Part I: *Ramaini*, Varanasi, 1974, p. 107
18. *Sakhi* IV. 1
19. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 262
20. *Sakhi* IV. 5
21. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 133
22. *Sakhi* IV. 3

23. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 130
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, p.131
26. *Sakhi* IX. 10
27. *Sakhi* IV. 2
28. *Sakhi* VIII. 13
29. *Sakhi* VII. 6
30. *Sakhi* IV.6
31. *Sakhi* II. 12
32. Swami Yogeshananda, *The Vision of Sri Ramakrishna*, Madras, 1973, p. 19
33. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 164
34. *Ibid.*, p. 184
35. *Sakhi* IX. 9
36. Tagore, *op. cit.*, p. 45
37. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 279
38. *Sakhi* IX. 1
39. Dvivedi, *op. cit.*, p. 286 ; Tagore, *op. cit.*, p. 142

CONTRIBUTION OF GURU GOBIND SINGH



GURU GOBIND SINGH'S THEORY OF KARMA*

AVTAR SINGH

"Deh Siva bar moh ehai subh karman te kabhun na taron..." occurs as an Epilogue to *Chandi Chariter I* of Guru Gobind Singh. The line means: "Grant me this boon, O God, from Thy greatness; May I never refrain from righteous acts." This couplet not only occurs at a crucial point, but is also central to the philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh. It may even be seen as a reassertion of the central theme of Sikh philosophy.

However, it would be in order to point out that Guru Gobind Singh is a link in the socio-spiritual tradition initiated by Guru Nanak and developed by the succeeding Gurus. It is necessary to view him and his ideal structure as elements in the organic development of what is now termed as Sikhism. If we look at him in complete isolation, we may be left with a partial and fragmentary understanding of the person and his philosophy.

Guru Gobind Singh re-stresses the role of 'Will.' The will leads to action which is a necessary factor in the development of self; this means that his concern was chiefly moral. His resolve "never to refrain from righteous acts" ought to be appreciated in the light of the conflicting views held about the efficiency and primacy of the volition of *Karma*. The term *Karma* is equivocal. In the Punjabi language, it can be interpreted in terms of its origin either from Sanskrit or from Arabic. Even when used in terms of its origin from Sanskrit, it has different meanings in different contexts; therefore it is necessary to keep in mind the contextual element while interpreting *Karma*. We may now enumerate some of the meanings of the word as used in the Guru Granth, the principal

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scripture to the Sikhs.

1. *Karma* is used in the sense of the law of retribution.¹

2. *Karma* occurs in the sense of rituals as liturgical sacrifices and ceremonials. At times the Gurus also used the compound term *karam kand* to convey this meaning. Many times, however, the simple term *karma* is employed to convey the same sense. For example, "*karam kāṇḍ boh kare achār*"² and "*karam karat badhe ahamev*"³ appear to provide the sense of ceremonials. *Karma* in this sense has been rejected in Sikhism as of no value.

3. *Karma* is also used to convey the meaning of grace or mercy. This usage has been adopted in the Gurus' compositions from Arabic and Quranic usage; for instance "*karam hovai satgurū milāi*."⁴

4. This term is also used in the Guru Granth in the sense of moral action. Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Guru of the Sikhs, while referring to an evil person, says, "*karam dharam saglāi khove*,"⁵ that is, "he has forfeited all duties and righteous acts." In the same sense, Guru Nanak has said, "*karam kartūt beli bisthārī rāmnām phal huā*,"⁶ that is, "the actions and practice constitute the creeper, the God-realization is the fruit." The creeper here is a symbol used to convey the path of self-realization.

Now we are in a better position to appreciate the view of Guru Gobind Singh regarding the constitution of righteous acts till the end of one's life. It seems that before and after the emergence of Sikhism, *karma* was used in Hindu philosophy mostly in the sense of rituals. Historically, the *Purva Mimamsa* and particularly the Bhatta school took the position that rituals alone are proper *karma*. This school "represents the extreme externalistic conception of morality and accepts ceremonialism in all its arbitrariness." According to Bhatta, "the sacrificial acts in themselves constitute *dharma*."⁷ It may be relevant to add that this school has played a very vital role in shaping the religion of the Hindus.

However, we find that ritualistic view of *karma* and its efficacy is controverted and rejected by some schools of Hindu philosophy. Sankhya and Advaita Vedanta are antagonistic to the ritualistic path of action. But it must be remembered that these schools did not seek to substitute ritualistic *karma* by moral acts. The sub-

stitute in the case of Advaita Vedanta and Sankhya was *Jnana*, knowledge. Even in the case of *Bhagavad Gita*, *karma* is not necessarily moral. It has to be understood in the context of caste duties. In case of Buddhism we find that it contests and even denies the value of liturgical action. It maintains that "... an act is essentially action that can be morally qualified."⁸

In Sikhism also, the ritualistic meaning of *karma* is rejected. *Subh karma* does not mean a ritual but a moral act. Guru Gobind Singh makes it amply clear that the rejection of *karma* as ritual does not mean rejection of moral action.

There was a notion in the Hindu ethics that even good actions bind a person to the world. According to the law of *karma* everyone must reap the fruits of his action. Thus it is described that "persons, who have accomplished works for public good, will depart at death by the smoky path and pass on from smoke to night and through a long course reach the *devas* (gods) but again return by the same route and change into smoke and then into mist, rain, seeds and again pass into the offspring of those who eat them." This points to the subordinate position accorded even to the concept of social good or *karma*.⁹ The only possibility of *moksa* then is to exhaust all previous *karma* and stop further *karma*. It may not, however, be historically possible to maintain that such a belief was very widely followed to its rigoristic logical end. A disdain of the *karma* by the *jnanins*, nevertheless is quite obvious in some schools of Indian philosophy. In the background of the rejection of action by some, the categorical and emphatic assertion of Guru Gobind Singh "not to refrain from *subh karma* assumes the significance of a reassurance from a realized self that *subh karma* does not bind a person to the world. Guru Nanak depicts reality as dynamic, *karta*. The self which seeks to realize this primordial reality has to realize it as a *karta*. In short, *karma* as moral action occupies a pre-eminent position in philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh."

A question, however, may be raised as to the criterion of moral action. The proposition is here advanced that Guru Gobind Singh accepts the Moral Standard laid by Guru Nanak and the subsequent Gurus. The value hierarchy is in terms of self-realiza-

tion. In selecting the Moral Standard the Gurus are in harmony with the traditional Indian thinking.

The self-realization, however, is not conceived purely in metaphysical terms, but is visualized in a dynamic and perfectionist sense. The five *khandas* mentioned in *Japuji* of Guru Nanak is a broad outline of the value structure accepted by Guru Gobind Singh. The first *dharam khand* may be spoken of as the moral context in which all of us normally act. In itself it is higher than the stage where a person does not act according to any moral obligation at all. There is an element of egotranscendence in it. Insofar as the person accepts the obligations involved in the role he has chosen to play, he transcends the ego.

We may ask if there are any specific duties mentioned by Guru Nanak in connection with *dharam khand*. The answer is in the negative. The Guru has not laid down any specific duties. It could perhaps be due to the simple reason that there are countless social environments, which makes it impossible to lay down specific duties in each case. As Sikhism does not contribute to the idea of special duties (*visesa dharma*) of castes, it leaves sufficient scope for the persons or groups involved to determine specific actions according to the existential situations and needs.

Is there any categorical moral principle applicable to all? The answer, of course, is in the affirmative. The clue to the most general moral principle is that one ought to perform one's function to the best of one's ability. Here *rta* and *dharma* in the sense of cosmic and moral order, respectively, seem to fuse and produce the moral content. Besides, Guru Nanak underlines the element of progress as a necessary constituent of the moral principle. The person in *dharam khand* not only performs his function to the best of his ability, but has also an eye on progress. Relevant to this context is the saying *gaya japai jae*, that is, he who is going appears already to have gone. The moral agent not only cultivates moral virtues and performs his social obligations, but appears also to be going towards wider horizons. Their wider horizon constitutes the subject-matter of the tri-dimensional progress.

The tri-dimensional progress refers to three *khandas*, namely, *gian khand*, *saram khand* and *karam khand*, that is, the dimension

of knowledge, aesthetics and action. The three constitute a totality. The self ought to realize simultaneously all three aspects of the personality. The action or *karma* of the person is the acid test of his realization. The cognitive and aesthetic realization ought to be coeval with their expression in choice and action. The *sach khand*, which is *sehaj*, is the apex of the realization marked by an equilibrium or naturalness of poise and is indicative of highest perfection as well as the conscious participation in reality. The *sachiar*, the ideal person, is a man of *subh karma*, great action. Substituting inner freedom for renunciation of the earthly, Guru Gobind Singh as well as Guru Nanak were voicing a necessity of practising what we know and feel. The imperative of consistency in thoughts, words and deeds is again the subject-matter of Guru Gobind Singh's *Zafarnama*.¹⁰

In the *Zafarnama*, Guru Gobind Singh approvingly refers to the moral values in Islam which require a similar harmony in one's thoughts, words and actions. He tells us that when a *kar*, that is, when a situation is past all other remedial action, recourse to the sword is justified. The necessity of action is quite unmistakable here. A person confronted with the difficulties in the execution of action should not abandon the action itself, but ought to continue and see the activity through. The sword is only symbolic of the extreme measure of activity.

Guru Nanak also has made *chalna*¹¹ as central to the scheme of life. *Chalna* is from the same root as *char*, from which also we have *achar*, conduct. *Chalna* as activity is thus a continuity of the moral theme from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. The principle of *raza* (doing one's duty in the spirit of dedication) coupled with *chalna* is not fatalism but embodies in itself a radical realization of ethico-spiritual ideals.

The *rahitnamas*, moral codes, seeking to draw their authority from Guru Gobind Singh, are noted for their stress on moral action involving the education of emotion, whole-hearted participation in socio-economic activity and harmony in thought, word and deed. Such an ideal person was perhaps called by Guru Nanak as *mard ka chela*. This *mard ka chela* was not Guru Gobind Singh alone. Everyone of us ought to realize this ideal self in terms of

cognition, affection and conation. Thus *mard ka chela* is a complete ethico-mystic ideal.

In this connection, a doubt may occur in our minds. A harmony in thought, word and deed is not an end in itself. Ignorance combined with fanaticism may result in the correspondence of words and actions, but such action may be very dangerous and destructive. Therefore, it may not be sufficient and proper to describe Guru Gobind Singh in terms of *bhakti* and *sakti* alone. His great concern for *gian* (knowledge, *Jnana*) cannot be overlooked. The correct pattern of the ideal self as stressed by him appears to be in terms of *gian*, *saram* and *karma*, that is, cognitive, aesthetic and conative realization.

We may also notice here that the same couplet, quoted in the beginning, indicated the spirit for the consummation of *subh karma*. Guru Gobind Singh adds, "May I fight without fear all foes in life's battle, with confident courage claiming the victory." A fearless optimism and self confidence are the twin requisites of the ethico-mystic progress of man. Fearless or *nirbhau* is also used by Guru Nanak for the real self. Fearlessness as the quality of character has been underlined by Kabir in the Guru Granth¹² when he says, "A hero is one who does not abandon the fight even though he be cut into shreds." On the same page, Kabir reminds us that a coward is not a fit person for self-realization. The teaching of the *Gita* is a pointer in similar direction.

How fearlessness may be cultivated, is another question. Fearlessness is morally sustained when the cause for which a person is struggling or the objectives aimed at by the action are altruistic in character. The whole background of the *Chandi Chariter* in which this couplet occurs, and Guru Gobind Singh's resolution point to the objective of righteousness. Fearlessness for an immoral act is not fearlessness but an aggression and, howsoever it may appear to be rewarding, it is always at some other's cost, and hence morally stultifying. An objective of social good provides reinforcement to fearlessness as an attitude characterizing an activity. It is held that moral quality of an act is in harmony with the spiritual, and thus the spiritual forces are aligned to the side of a person striving for righteousness. Various legends including that of Prehalad are quoted

for this in the Guru Granth. The testimony to such a felt-reinforcement is also provided by psychology. Guru Gobind Singh, in seeking this boon of fearlessness with reference to Siva, could be seen as exemplifying this psycho-spiritual collaboration.

When is a man generally fearful? Faced with unfamiliar physical or social environments, he may respond with fear. A person placed in a novel existential situation of sufficient complexity and difficulty may be inclined to be fearful. In order to cover up this fear he may quietly defer the action and thus avoid the responsibility of choice and action. But when this pattern of putting off the burden of choice and activity becomes generalized, the self may grow up to be inactive and fearful.

Fear may also grow from ignorance and be sustained in superstition. Jealousy and hatred may also be the contributory factors to the growth and development of a fearful personality. An extreme attachment with things and persons may also generate fear of losing them. The *upadesa* of Krishna in the *Gita* is a reminder to us of this possibility.

It is sometimes argued that an action emanating from fear may often be more powerful than an action rising from courage. The point to remember, however, is the moral quality of the action concerned. There may be no doubt of the moral supremacy of the actions based on courage, in contradistinction to the actions stimulated by fear. It is only a courageous and fearless person who can say in the words of Guru Gobind Singh, "With confident courage, positively realize the victory." The spirit of this resolution and the pattern of his life were consistent with each other.

The couplet "*deh Siva bar moh ehai. . .*" occurs in the background of the din and fury of clattering weapons, a fury characterized in and climaxed in conflicting values. Here Guru Gobind Singh resolves to continue the struggle. Toleration of time-worn and evil-ridden *status quo* is against the spirit of dynamic progress. In challenging and being challenged, the process of self-criticism and self-examination continues and the moral quality of *karma* is preserved. Those interpreters who present him as a model of tolerance overlook this social challenge of Guru Gobind Singh.

Today our environments are different. The times have

changed; the motives are wearing different masks; but the conflicts which are born of ignorance, superstition and inactivity still persist. One should not be indifferent to the ideal of self-realization through social participation. Indifference is not impartiality, because impartiality is a moral quality of action but indifference is a lack of action. It may be extremely relevant in our age to remember Guru Gobind Singh's resolve, "not to turn away from good action. . ."

NOTES

1. Guru Granth, Sri Rag, p. 78
2. *Ibid.*, Gauri, p. 162
3. *Ibid.*, p. 324
4. *Ibid.*, Majh, p. 109
5. *Ibid.*, Dhanasari, p. 676
6. *Ibid.*, Asa, p. 351
7. S.K. Maitra, *Ethics of the Hindus* (Calcutta : University of Calcutta, 1956), p. 91
8. De La Vallee Poussin, *Karma* in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings, Vol. 7, p. 674
9. Surma Dasgupta, *Development of Moral Philosophy in India* (Bombay : Orient Longmans, 1961), p. 12. The Upanisad quoted is *Chhandogya*, V. 10-3-6
10. Guru Gobind Singh, *Zafarnama*, St. 55, 13, 45, 18, 64, 43 and 56
11. Guru Granth, *Japuji*, v
12. *Ibid.*, Sloka Kabir, p. 1105

SIKH PHILOSOPHY AS AKĀLVĀDA* (NON-TEMPORALISM)

WAZIR SINGH

The expression Akāl, in the sense of Timeless and Immortal, is central and integral of Sikh tradition and thinking.¹ The term is extensively used in Dasam-Granth hymns, especially by Guru Gobind Singh, who captions one of his poetic compositions *Akāl Ustati*, i. e. 'In Praise of the Timeless'. However, the concept of Akāl is not peculiar to the Dasam Granth. It was employed by Guru Nanak and other Gurus, as well as Bhagat Kabir. Whereas Guru Nanak's use of *Akāl* is noted in the Mūl-mantra itself, Kabir's reference is found in *Māru-rāg* hymns (p. 1104 of G.G.).² Guru Ram Das uses the expression a couple of times, in conjunction with *mūrat* and *purakh* (as in *Sri-rāg chhants* and *Gauri-Pūrabi Karhale* (pp. 78 and 235 respectively). Guru Arjan refers to *Akāl* several times (as for instance, in *Mājh*, p. 99, *Sorath*, p. 609, *Rāmkali*, p. 916, *Māru*, pp. 1079 and 1082).

It may be noted that the term *Akāl* has been used in Gurbāni in two forms: (a) as a qualifier or adjective, and (b) as substantive. In the expression Akāl Mūratī, the first part is often treated as a qualifier, even though some interpreters take the two words as independent units, viz. *Akāl* and *Mūrat*, just as *Nirbhau* and *Nirvair* are. In the *Māru-rāg* quotations, Kāl and Akāl have been clearly used as substantives by Guru Arjan and Kabir. The Tenth Guru most often treats the expression as a noun. Akāl Ustati is the Praise of Akāl and "Hail, O Akāl, Hail, O Kirpāl!" of Jāp Sāhib also takes the related expression as substantives. The meaning of Akāl in this context is 'timeless', 'non temporal', 'deathless,' 'not governed

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by temporal process', or 'not subject to birth, decay and death'. This appears to be negative coining, in each case. But the intent is affirmative. Akāl as deathless or non-temporal implies everlasting reality, eternal Being, or transcendent Spirit; it further implies Eternity, Being, or Essence. The linguistic form may be negative, but the semantic implication is unmistakably affirmative.

The author of Jāp Sāhib³ in the Dasam Granth has depicted the Supreme Reality as Akāl with its innumerable manifestations. It is the same Reality that was given the epithet of Sat/i in the Guru Granth Sahib. 'Sat/i' is the primordial name of the eternal Being (Māru, p. 1083). All the names that we utter in respect of God are functional or attributive names. The basic reality is nameless. Guru Gobind Singh expressly calls it ANĀME (nameless). But, even namelessness can serve as a name. When we say Brahman is featureless, 'featurelessness' becomes its feature. In order to give expression to our sense of the Beyond, that which defies all expression or description, we coin several terms, just as Nothingness, Emptiness, Big Zero, Sūnya, as well as Formless, Nir-ākār, Nirāṅkār, and Nirgun. But again, Nirāṅkār is a name, and so are other epithets so coined. Perhaps, we cannot do without names. It is our linguistic compulsion to assign a name or symbol to anything we know. It is human compulsion. This explains our propensity to coin a name for the Nameless. Sikhism has chosen Sat/i and Akāl, in order to signify what it regards as the Eternal Spirit, beyond the pale of time, temporality or cosmic processes.

TIME AND ETERNITY IN SIKHISM

Guru Gobind Singh's *bāṇī* is a repository of concepts and terms, especially of the epithets relating to 'time'. Besides Kāl and Akāl he uses Mahā Kāl (macrō-time) and Sarb-Kāl (all-time) to indicate a Being above and beyond the eventful time of the universe. For him, Kāl itself is a dimension of Akāl, the only difference being the process that characterizes temporal events, and the eternality of Akāl. Every occurrence or event has beginning and end, each event is a link in the on-going process of Time. The cosmic drama or the wondrous show of the world is all a creation of Time. The power of Time controls the worldly events; the only unity independent of time is Time itself, and that is Akāl, the Time-

less. That is why God is both Time and Timeless in Guru Gobind Singh's *bāni*. The aspect of Time is the immanent aspect, the presence of Spiritual Essence in each worldly occurrence. It is the 'personality' of the Supreme, the *Chit* or consciousness of Sat-Chit-Anand.⁴ The other, transcendent aspect, is the Eternal, the Beyond, the Inexpressible, the Fathomless, Nirgun Brahman, assigned the name Akāl.

This doctrine of Timeless Being runs parallel to the Advaitic philosophy of Shankara. The latter hold the ultimate reality as *advaita* (non-dual), which is of the nature of Brahman Ātman, that is pure consciousness. The soul is not different from Brahman; the world is an illusory appearance. When enlightenment dawns, the individual self and Māyā are no more; the Brahman as sole reality remains. In other words, the duality of 'I' and 'Brahman', of illusion and reality, is eliminated. The term 'non-dual' or *advaita* is negative coinage that, like Akāl, is affirmative in its meaning, yet it points to oneness of the ultimate reality, bearing monistic implications. If further stretched, it turns out to be absolutism, leaving no scope for any autonomous unit or entity, other than the Absolute. Thus, Non-dualism is the title of the Vedantic theory of Shankara, and distinguishes it from all the other philosophical theories, e.g. Dualism, Realism, Śūnyavāda, Existentialism, Evolutionism, etc. The title derives from Shankara's conception of the highest reality, the central theme of his philosophy. On this analogy, Sikh philosophy may rightly be designated Akālvāda (Non-temporalism).

The Akāl of Sikhism is not a fixed, unmoving substance, but the spiritual principle of the entire cosmic existence. The phenomenal world emanates from Spirit, and the Spirit permeates the world. Like a tree with flourishing branches, the absolute Spirit moves with the motions of the worldly objects and energizes them. According to Gurbāni, the Formless Being keeps on creating the phenomenal world. He creates and recreates and carries on with his creative activity. Akāl of the Sikh conception is not consciousness pure and simple, blank and void, but is Creative Spirit, as the expression 'Kartā Purakh' implies. In other words, creativity is the core of Akāl. And it is creativity that shows up in the dimension of

Kāl. Acting through Time, the Timeless creates beings of the world. It does not seem possible to conceive of creativity without conceiving temporality or time. It is through creativity that the Timeless transforms itself from Nirgun to Sargun, from the *aphur* state into *saphur* state, from the precreation essence into cosmic existence.

The creativity of Akāl is not confined to the timeless and temporal aspects of the Supreme. Through its Sargun facet the Nirgun assumes the character of the Divine, of the good gracious God, the loving Lord or Prabhu of the devotees. From 'it' the Ultimate becomes 'He'— the person with whom communication is sought and established. From 'Akāl', He becomes 'Sri-Akāl'. The Sikh slogan and popular form of greeting 'Sat/i Sri Akāl' succinctly conveys the idea of Timeless Being that is the singular Eternal Reality. The phrase combines the concepts of Satya and Akāl, implying that the Eternal and the Timeless are one: Satya itself is the Everlasting Lord. Thus, the creative essence turns the metaphysical Being into active principle of the world, into conscious Power involved in the cosmic process, into Hero of the world, cherishing his creation with delight. Being the beneficent Lord, he lends some of his creativity to the created beings. Humanity draws its creativity and creative energy from the Divine reservoir of Creativity.

The Sikh tradition is imbued with heroism and valour that are inspired by the conceptual framework of Akālvāda. The Akāl of Guru Gobind Singh is All Steel (Sarab-Loh), a symbolic expression for the valiant heroes of his conception. Guru Nanak had applied the epithet of Jodhā-Mahābali-Sūrma⁵ to the valiant in the human as well as divine form. In depicting the Akāl, the Tenth Guru associated the attributes of Sarab-Kāl, Sarab Dyāl, Sarab Pāl with his creativity. He calls him Glorious and great, Super form, Yogi of yogis, Moon of moons, Melody of music, Rhythm of the dance, liquidity of waters, movement of the winds.⁶ He is Akāl as well as Kripāl, the compassionate Lord. In fact, the whole, composition of Jāp Sāhib, with its wide range of attributive names, presents the twin framework of Akāl-Kripāl, like the female-male image of Ardhanārshvara.⁷ The Impersonal appears through all per-

sons, the Timeless encompasses all the temporal beings emanating from his Essence. He transcends the human world, yet is He the compassionate. His timeless essence permeates the temporal existence.

The concept of Akāl, central to Jāp Sāhib, has percolated to the social, political and cultural life of the Sikh community. Inspired by its theme, they call the Gurus' *bāṇī* 'Akālī *bāṇī*'. The political wing of the community is known as Akali Dal. The slogan 'Sat/i Sri Akāl' has become a form of greetings for the Punjabis in general. The process had been initiated much earlier, half a century before the advent of Guru Gobind Singh on the scene. The Sixth Guru had already identified the throne built at Amritsar as 'Akāl Takht' — the Throne of the Timeless Being.

AKAL MURAT/I AND AKAL PURAKH

The pair of elements *Akāl* (non-temporal) and *mūrat/i* (image), occurring in the Mūl Mantra⁸ itself, literally implies 'timeless image'. Elsewhere, in the compositions of Guru Ram Das (G.G. p. 78), and Guru Arjan Dev (pp.99, 609, 916 and 1082), the expression Akāl Mūrat/i reinforces the original meaning of Divine Reality that is beyond the process of time, and yet permeates the cosmic forms. The non-temporal Being transcends the space-time framework and, as such, is Formless. However, in its manifest aspect, the same Being assumes the cosmic Form. The Sikh vision of God combines the Formless and its expression in natural forms, the transcendent and the immanent, the Essence (Spirit) and Existence (creation).

The expression 'Akāl Mūrat/i' lends itself to interpretation in two ways. The exegetes who treat it as one term, take *akāl* in the adjectival form that qualifies the substantive Mūrat/i, the whole expression implying Everlasting Form equivalent to the Supreme Being. Those approaching the pair *akāl* and *mūrat/i* analytically, treat both the units independently, each expressing an attribute of the Divine Reality, believed to transcend time and space, yet manifest in space-time forms. But, despite the divergence of approach, both interpretations agree in substance, namely, the featureless eternal Reality assumes features and modes of empirical existence. To put it differently, 'Akāl Mūrat/i' presents a synthesis of Nirgun

and Sargun facets of the Absolute-God of Guru Nanak's vision.

The term Akālpurakh stands for the Divine Being or simply God. Like Akāl Mūrat/i, it is composed of two units, viz. *akāl* (non-temporal) and *purakh* (person). The latter finds place in the Mūl Mantra in conjunction with Kartā (Creator), the whole expression implying the Creator Divine Person. The Sikh tradition has adopted the expression Akālpurakh as a household term, used in common parlance just like its equivalents, such as Waheguru and Satinām.⁹

'Purakh' as a linguistic symbol derives from the Sanskrit Purusha (Man), invariably employed in the masculine gender. In the Vedic literature, the term also stands for the world, indicating the entirety of universal existence. In the Indian systems of Sāṅkhya and Yoga, Purusha, as one of the two cardinal metaphysical principles, stands for spirituality or simply consciousness, which exerts influence on Prakriti (Nature) that is physical in its make-up. The core of *purusha*, therefore, is consciousness, denoted by *chit* in the Sat-Chit-Ānand conception of the Absolute. This connotation of the term invests 'Purakh' with spirituality or self, rendering it as the Divine Person. Combined with *akāl*, the expression as a whole means the Everlasting Divine Person (God), in the Sikh tradition and literature.

'Akālpurakh' as such is rarely used in the Guru-Granth compositions. We come across the term in Guru Ram Das' Gauri Pūrabi Karhale (p.235) in the inverse form, viz. Purakh Akāli. However, the Dasam Granth compositions employ *Akālpurakh* as a substitute for God, the Eternal Being, transmitting the expression for use by posterity. Akāl being a cardinal and central concept of Sikhism, its use alongside *Purakh* accords a distinct theological status to *Akālpurakh* thereby ensuring its popular appeal among Sikh circles.

NOTES

1. CF. G.S. Talib, *Selections from the Holy Granth*, New Delhi : G.N. Foundation, 1982.
2. *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Holy Book of the Sikhs, compiled in 1604, consists of 1430 pages in print. The scripture is indicated as G.G. in the text; the pp. refer to its folios.

3. Jāp Sāhib is the first composition in the *Dasam Granth* (The holy book of the Tenth Guru) accorded a place of reverence next only to the *Guru Granth*, by the Sikh community.
4. Sat-Chit-Anand (lit. Being-Consciousness-Bliss) is the traditional Indian epithet for the Absolute-cum-God; it stands for Brahman, the Supreme Reality of Indian vision.
5. 'Jodha-Mahabali-Sūrma' is a favourite expression of Guru Nanak, indicating heroic qualities of a valiant-courageous crusader, championing righteous causes.
6. Cf. Gopal Singh's rendering of Jāp Sāhib, in *Thus Spake the Tenth Master*, Patiala: Punjabi Universtiy, 1978.
7. 'Ardhanārishvara' (lit. half female, half male) stands for the Indian image of Lord Shiva whose one-half represents his consort, implying the male-female nature of the divine principle.
8. 'Mūl-mantra' is the popular name applied to the basic credal formula with which the holy Guru Granth opens. It signifies the monotheistic intent of the entire text that follows.
9. Both 'Waheguru' and 'Sat/i Nām' stand for God in Sikh parlance. The former expresses the human sense of wonder for the Wonderful Enlightener, whereas the latter is indicative of the primordial, everlasting Reality Supreme.

DURGĀ RECALLED BY THE TENTH GURU*

NIKKY-GUNINDER KAUR SINGH

*Kautak hetu kari ne, satisay kī kathā eh pūri bhae hai
jahī namitt paṛai suni hai nar, so niscāi kari tahi dae hai*

—Gurū Gobind Singh

For the thrill of it has the poet delineated the tale of the goddess.

My object is that whosoever reads or hears her story may be inspired with faith and determination.

Guru Gobind Singh picked themes from ancient epics and mythology to produce verse charged with martial fervour. The modern Indian philosopher, Dr S. Radhakrishnan sees in this "the profound influence which Hindu tradition and mythology has had on the development of Sikh religion."¹ Contrarily, Guru Gobind Singh by adopting some of the classical themes and rendering them with fresh verve revived and revitalized the Indian literary tradition. Those themes as such, however, remained outside the frame of Sikh religious belief. Guru Gobind Singh specifically forbade his disciples to pay reverence to any gods and goddesses besides the Supreme Being. "Besides the One I adore none another, whatever benefaction I seek I seek from the One—*tumahi chhād koi avar na dhyāyūn, jo bar chāhoṅ so tum te pāoṅ*."²

Out of the myriads of gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon—three hundred and thirty million traditionally—it is the goddess Durga who became Guru Gobind Singh's favourite literary subject. She figures as heroine in two of his compositions included in the *Dasam Granth*, the Book of the Tenth Master, i.e. of Gurū Gobind Singh. Durga (*dur*/difficult + *gam*/reach = the inaccessible or unattainable one) is variably known as Kālī, Chaṇḍī, Camuṇḍa, and Bhadrakālī. The story of her titanic battle against the demons

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as narrated in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* in fourteen cantos³ is retold by Guru Gobind Singh in his compositions, *Caṇḍi Caritra* ("The Exploits of Caṇḍi"), Parts I and II, a work in ornate Braj, and *Caṇḍi di Var* ("The Ballad of Caṇḍi") in the Punjabi language. Guru Gobind Singh's poems are abbreviated version of the original account, rendered in verse employing a variety of meters and rich in image and cadence. The battles described are against the demons Locan, Caṇḍ, Muṇḍ, Rakatbij, Nisumbh, and Sumbh. Even in Guru Gibind Singh's *Akāl Ustati* a hymn written in praise (*ustati*) of the Timeless One (*Akāl*), one part (sections 211 to 230) is a panegyric to the prowess of the invincible Durga. Unable or perhaps unwilling to recognize the relevance of this female mythological figure for the poetic vision of Guru Gobind Singh, scholars such as D.P. Ashta⁴ and Trilochan Singh⁵ think that the eulogies of the goddess belong more to some version of the *Caṇḍi Caritra* than to a purely devotional poem like the *Akāl Ustati*. The appropriateness of the image is not due to any particular category of Guru Gobind Singh's poetry, but to his intuition as a whole. Our effort then will be to discern as to why this Hindu goddess is recalled by Guru Gobind Singh again and again in his Braj and Punjabi poems, both sacred and secular. This we shall attempt to do from the sociological, aesthetic, and mythological standpoints.

That Durga is "recalled" and not invoked by Guru Gobind Singh must however be noticed before we proceed with our inquiry. His invocation is even addressed to the Transcendent One. *Caṇḍi Caritra*, for instance, begins with "*ādi apār alekh anant akālabhekh alakh anāsā*."⁶ With the prefix alliterative 'a' added to each word, the characteristics and qualities of the One are enumerated in the negative form. Beginningless, Unfathomable, Ineffable, Infinite, Timeless, Formless, Indescribable, Undestroyable, is the Creator of all. The *Akāl Ustat* also opens with the supplication to the totally Transcendent One: "I salute the One Beginningless Being—*praṇvo ādi ekaṅkārā*."⁷ As we may recall, Guru Gobind Singh's addressing the first five disciples admitted to the Khalsa baptism had rejected the worship of gods and goddesses, of "the Hindu deities such as Rama, Kṛṣṇa, Brahma and Durga."⁸ Also, among the attributes of the Supreme Being mentioned in Guru

Nanak's Mūl Mantra (the *creed essential* of the Sikh religion) is *ajūni*, that is One who does not take birth, does not incarnate. The Sikh faith does not thus postulate any *avatār* or incarnate being co-equal or co-powerful with the Transcendent One and worthy of human worship. In his *Śabda Hazāre* Gurū Gobind Singh says that whatever powers the gods and goddesses have are derived from the Primal Being.⁹ In the second passage of *Caṇḍi di Vār*, he states that Brahma, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are the creations of the One. It is from the One that Rama received his prowess to pierce with his arrows the ten-headed Ravana; it is from the One that Kṛṣṇa received the power to catch Kansa by the hair and tear him apart. Not only the gods but the demons are also created by, and therefore subject to, the Transcendent One. Says the Guru "*tain hi Durgā sāj kai daintān dā nās karāiā*— You are the One who created Durga and caused the demons to be destroyed."¹⁰ The term *sāj kai* denotes the creation of the goddess by the Metaphysical Reality. The doctrine of Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva— being the lords of the universe, i.e. the creator, preserver, destroyer trinity of the Hindu tradition— is also denied in *Sri Mukhibāk Savayye*: "Recognize none other but the One alone," proclaims Gurū Gobind Singh.¹¹ Once when he was composing the *Akāl Ustati* he went into such a rapturous trance over the word *tūhi*, or "You alone," that he sat in this state for sixteen hours. Sixteen times the word *tūhi* was repeated in that verse in the hymn.¹²

The "recalling" of Durgā is a retelling of the heroic deeds of the goddess as narrated in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. Gurū Gobind Singh's own words make this explicit. After inscribing the invocatory "Ikṁ Oankār Wahiguru Ji Ki Fateh"—there is One Being; Hail to the One to Whom belongs the Victory," he says, "*ath caṇḍi caritra ukṭi bilās*"¹³— now the tale (*bilās*) of Caṇḍi will be told." Acknowledging the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* narrative to be an extraordinary story, he wishes to retell it with due stylistic embellishment:

ratan promud kar bacan, cini tā mai gaco...

*adbhuti kathā apār, samajh kari cit mai*¹⁴

I shall bead the story with sentences full of jewel-like choicest words
The story (*kathā*) which I think is marvellous (*adbhūt*).

Rather than a devotee, we encounter here the artist. Gurū Gobind Singh's objective is, then, certainly not to invoke or worship the goddess, but to renarrate the chivalrous deeds in words studded like luminous gems. The Purāṇic account has no historical or religious meaning for the poet; it is for him simply a wonderful (*adbhut*) story (*kathā*) or tale (*bilās*). The poet's overall objective is the reproduction of a thrilling story—"kautak hetu kari kavi ne."¹⁵ Throughout the retelling, the tone of Guru Gobind Singh's poetry lacks reverence that would underlie an invocation. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa account of seven hundred verses is reproduced by Guru Gobind Singh in considerably condensed versions. The martial exploits of Durga are described by him with zest and in superb poetry, but in his compositions she is nowhere deified as she is in the original Sanskrit text. The invocations to the goddess by the gods in the Purāṇic account are absent from Gurū Gobind Singh's versions.

SOCIOLOGICAL

Guru Gobind Singh's choice of Durga means unequivocal acknowledgement of woman's power. Countless goddesses figure in the Purāṇas. Almost all of them are married with gods as their spouses. As wives, the goddesses lack individual status and identity. Many of them, like the wives of Brahmā and Viṣṇu, appear to be thin, dependent creatures, having no distinctive personalities or traits of their own. According to Cornelia Dimmitt and J.A.B. van Buitenen, the marriage of gods and goddesses is probably a reflection of the synthesis that occurred between different races and cultures — Aryan and Dravidian— in the early history of the Indian people.

Certainly the goddesses as wives are utterly dependent upon their gods, much as the indigenous race was subdued and rendered subject by the conquering Āryans. In any case, it seems that only fragments of the careers of the goddesses in Indian tradition remain in the stories found in the Purāṇas.¹⁶

The one exception is Durga. Most rare in the Purāṇas, she is the one goddess without husband, consort or lover. She is independent; she is powerful. She is the central figure in the story of the battle against the demons. She subsumes the many and various powers of the gods who individually and collectively lacked the

strength to defeat the buffalo-demon. In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, her birth is described as a miraculous event, and an auspicious one for the gods.¹⁷ Having taken form from blazing light Durga charges forth mounted on her lion, paying-homage to no one, acknowledging authority of no one. She is her own mistress.

It is ironic that the significance of Durga's autonomy would be misinterpreted by modern Western scholars such as Dimmitt and van Buitenen. In their introduction to "The Goddess" in *Classical Hindu Mythology*, which they edited and translated together, they characterize the unique freedom enjoyed by Durga as her "lack of control."¹⁸

Is the ferocious goddess sheer "untamed energy" and "untamed fury?" Do her excesses "threaten to destroy all life?" Would she "annihilate the world" in its entirety? The immense energy and fury of Durga are thoroughly disciplined: these are directed towards annihilating and destroying only the demons, symbolic representations of evil and negative forces in the societal (and psychological) arena. While being the destroyer, Durga simultaneously saves humanity from the pit of hell. In the *Akāl Ustati*, for instance, she is addressed as both destroyer and saviour.¹⁹ For the male gods who come to seek her help, she indeed is the saviour. This crucial point is overlooked by these eminent Western scholars. Instead, they tend to see the goddess in her common domestic role, that is, with a male (husband, consort, or lover), passively balancing and harmonizing the "fruitful continuity" of the world.

Moreover, they fail to appraise the magnitude of her person which has the power of life that may be withheld as well as bestowed. She can generate on her own: Kali is produced by Durga from her fury. The goddess needs no male. Kali, the black goddess who is addressed as both Time Giver (*Kāla Mātṛ* – creator, the mother, the giver of birth of time) and Time Taker (*Kāla Harśini*—destroyer, the clipper of time and thus one who brings death) emanates from Durga's forehead: "From her broad forehead of curved eye-brows suddenly sprang forth Kali of terrible countenance, armed with a sword and noose."²⁰

Furthermore, the gods themselves revere Durga as "Mother" and they look up to her for help to overcome and destroy their

enemy. They pay homage "to the Goddess who among all created beings stands firm with the form of Mother (*Mātrupen*)."²¹ Also, they perceive her "at once most gentle and most harsh."²² This "Wholeness" of the woman in herself (in S.H. Nasr's word, it would correspond to her being both Eve and Mary)²³ is overlooked; the single Durga is analyzed by Dimmit and Buitenen in the singular aspect of her power to destroy or withhold life.

It was the full independence of Durga's character, her ability to challenge and quell evil, her power to embrace all of life—birth and death, creation and decay, that attracted the imagination of Guru Gobind Singh. This role of the goddess fitted in well with his own design to renovate and regenerate an effete society. He made her into a paradigm to overcome weakness and cowardice and to abolish unjust political authority and social inequalities and to forge a new structure based on the values of egalitarianism, justice, and freedom.

AESTHETIC

I have narrated the wondrous story of Caṇḍi in verse in entirety:
In the martial tone is it cast.
Each verse is more captivating than the other.
Fresh and new are the similes from the beginning to the end.
For the thrill of it has the poet delineated the tale of the goddess.
My object is that whosoever reads or hears her story may be inspired
with faith and determination.²⁴

This penultimate passage in the *Caṇḍi Caritra* sums up Guru Gobind Singh's object in versifying in the vernacular the story of Durga as well as his aesthetic values and ideals. Guru Gobind Singh intended to employ all the different poetic devices to lend enchantment and vigour to the account. In this section we shall try to examine some of the artistic features of the composition.

The first noteworthy element is the tone or mood of the poem. "*Sabh hi rasrudra mai hai*—all of it is the martial tone," says the Guru (line 1). In *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, Ananda Coomaraswamy notes that a work of art is result of the combination of four elements: (1) Determinants (*vibhāva*), viz. the physical stimulants to aesthetic reproduction, particularly the theme and its parts and the overall setting with its time and place. (2) Consequents (*anubhāva*), the specific and conventional means of "regis-

tering" emotional states, in particular gestures. (3) Moods (*bhāva*), the conscious emotional states as represented in art.²⁵ Herein Coomaraswamy distinguishes between the thirty-three fugitive or transient moods such as joy, agitation, impatience and the nine permanent (*sthāyi*) moods such as the erotic and the heroic. "In any work, one of the Permanent Moods must constitute a master motif to which all the others are subordinate." (4) The representation of involuntary physical reactions (*sattva bhāva*), for example fainting.²⁶ It is easily discernible that the third of these four elements is Guru Gobind Singh's primary concern and this is the dominant characteristic of his presentation of the story of Durga in verse. His purpose is to evoke an atmosphere or mood of heroism, and this he does through powerful verbal image and simile and through martial rhythms and cadences delineating Durga's person and her feats and battle-scene.

While the dominant *rasa* of the Durga poem is *raudra*, *śrīṅgār* (erotic) is not altogether missing. Durga is depicted here in a most awesome aspect, with eyes raining fire, hissing snakes around her neck and lethal weapons in her hands. She is mounted on a roaring tiger and she smites the enemy with stark ferocity. Yet this picture is relieved by handsome, even sensuous, sentiment. For instance, the following description:

Luminous like the moon is her face,
 and a sight of it charms away many a woe.
 Her hair hangs like Shivji's serpents,
 her eyes are the envy of both lotus and the gazelle.
 Her brows are in the manner of a bow;
 her lashes like the arrows.
 She has the waist of a lion
 and marches with the majesty of a royal tusker.
 She abides on the mountain-top;
 none can resist the splendour of her charms.
 She holds a sword in her hand and rides a lion;
 Flaming like gold is her presence.
 In another hand she carries a bow of war.
 The fish are shamed by her restless energy.
 The lotus and gazelle by the softness of her eyes;
 The parrots by her nose;
 The pigeons by her neck;
 The cuckoo by her voice;

The pomegranate by the pearly row of her teeth.

Touching the person of the goddess.

The moonbeams have become more lustrous.²⁷

Here we encounter a radiant and majestic figure whose charms none can resist. Such is her loveliness that even the moonbeams—after touching her person—become more lustrous ! In a verse in his *Akāl Ustati*, the poet describes her ankle bells making a silvery peal.²⁸ While she is in the midst of the fierce battle, a passage in *Caṇḍi Caritra* describes her sword making a jingling sound and twinkling like lightworms during a dark, stormy, monsoon night.²⁹ In another passage, the blood oozing from her neck is compared to the fresh red betel-leaf spit of a Ceylonese damsel.³⁰ A scholar like D.P. Ashta may consider Guru Gobind Singh's poetic fancy "not apt due to the unseemly mixture of the heroic and erotic sentiments,"³¹ but this combination of the two *rasas*, denotes in fact a rich artistic sensibility. The combination is most subtle: the heroic or the martial mood dominates and the romantic gently gets woven into it. The latter sets off the former. Even though the passage cited concentrates on the physical charms of the goddess—her arched eyebrows and her long lashes and her narrow waist—the keynote of the description is martial. For Durga's arched eyebrows are but in the manner of a "bow", her long darting eyelashes like the "arrows", her narrow and shapely waist like that of a "lion"—perhaps of the roaring one she rides. Though the lotus and gazelle are put to shame by the "softness" of her eyes, flaming like gold is Durga's presence and she marches with the majesty of a royal tusker. Similarly, the "jingling" and "twinkling" conjure up romantic images, but their subject is the goddess' sword, their surroundings, a fierce battlefield. Also, the silvery peal of Durga's anklets is juxtaposed to the clamour of the weapons around. And however "romantic" the analogy of the crimson betel-leaf spit of a young Ceylonese woman may be, the theme is the wound sustained in the fighting. The *raudra rasa* is dominant throughout and the *śringāra rasa* seeps in tenderly now and then, accentuating the former and creating a powerful aesthetic effect.

This overall heroic and martial temper is evoked by a succession of dynamic similes. In Guru Gobind Singh's own words, "Fresh and new are the similies from the beginning to the end." *Caṇḍi*

Caritra I and II both reveal the Guru's mastery of the figures of speech, especially the simile. He has created myriads of original images and similes and rendered through them so eloquently and vividly the character of Durga and the battles she engages in. The parallels drawn are at times rather homely and at others splendid – but through the genius of Guru Gobind Singh, they come out picturesquely. All are novel and fitting.

In fact, it is the common images that are highly appealing and have the most effect for their beauty, unexpectedness, awe, and humour. Many of the parallels come from the familiar crafts and trades of carpenters, oil extractors, dyers, and confectioners. For example, the goddess plunging into fierce action tramples down her enemies as “an oilman crushes the oil-seeds.”³² The demons are beheaded by the goddess in the manner of a carpenter chopping off trees.³³ The blood split by the touch of her sword runs down the field like coloured water splashed on the ground when the dyer's basin gets broken.³⁴ Soldiers in chariots, elephants and horses, are hurled down by her –she flings them down like a confectioner dunking *varrās* (sweet balls).³⁵

All these occupations—carpentry, oil-extracting, dying cloth, dunking *varrās*—must have been part of rural scenario experienced first-hand by Guru Gobind Singh. The rendering of the heroic deeds of the legendary Durga in images from everyday life, the inter-mixing of the extraordinary with the ordinary, creates an uncommon artistic effect. Latent in this aesthetic design seems to be the message from Guru Gobind Singh : everyone, be she confectioner, dyer, carpenter, or oil extractor, is endowed with Durga-like natural energy; her legend can be enacted out here and now.

The whole sequence of parallels from nature, as well as from the human world, flows out in a heightening rhythmical tempo. A dignified, echoic music of the richest timbre accompanies the visual analogies. The aural rhythm thus created intensifies the *raudra rasa*. At last three devices adopted to this end can be identified.

One is repetition of sounds. It seems as if Guru Gobind Singh had woven *raudra rasa* into the warp and woof of the language itself, in to the very texture of the words! His frequent use of alliteration, assonance, and consonance lend a stimulating rhythm and

music to the narrative. A continuous repetition of sounds like *bha*, *gha*, *jha*, *ḍha*, *ṛa*, reproduce the heavy sounds of combat. In “*durgā sabhe saṅghāre, rākṣas kharag lai*,”³⁶ for instance, the use of *bha*, *gha*, *ṛa*, make the verse throb with excitement. The sound here itself suggests that the goddess is felling the giant-like demons. In another verse: “*bhakā bhunk bheṛi ḍhakā ḍhunḍu ḍholam*,”³⁷ martial rhythm is ringingly audible. The reader becomes saturated with the frenzy and is carried away with it, feeling it flow turbulently in her/his own blood and nerves. In another line, “*taṇi taṇi tir calāe durgā ḍhanukh lai*,”³⁸ the sound alone—a combination of the alliteration of ‘t’ and the consonance of ‘lai’—reproduces the speed of action in actual fighting. Durga is pictured here shooting arrows (*tir calāe*) with all her might (*taṇi taṇi*). These devices are very appropriate to the description of battle-scenes.

Another favourite device is the use of onomatopoeia. Guru Gobind Singh subtly chooses words whose sound suggests their meaning. He reinforces *raudra rasa* by the aural effect of his diction. An example from *Caṇḍi Caritra II*:

kah kah su kūkat kaṅkiyam
bahi bahat bir su baṅkiyam
lah lahat bāṇi kripānyam
gah gahat pret masānyam
dah dahat davar daṅkiyam
lah lahat tegh traṅkiyam
dhramdhramat sāṅg dhaṅkiyam
bab kant bir su baṅkiyam
chhutkaṇt bāṇi kaṇānyam
harrānt khet khatrānyam
dhahkaṇt dāmar daṅkonī
*kah kahak kūkat juggaṇi*³⁹

Even without a translation, the above verses convey the awesomeness of the scenes of war. The crescendo of the varied sounds re-enacts the battle-scene. We hear the clashing of swords (*lah lahat*), the rumble of the drums (*dah dahat*), the crackle of arrows (*chhutkaṇt*), the rattle of brandishing spears (*lah lahat*), the wailing of the wives of the fallen demons (*kah kahak kūkat*), and the caw-caw of crows flying over corpses (*kah kah su kūkat kaṅkiyam*). As the ears hear these weird sounds, the eyes envision the gruesome images. The entire scene—the goddess spitting the demons

to their wailing wives (watching from far away) and the crows greedily awaiting to pounce upon corpses— comes vividly alive. This coalition of the visual and the aural in the poem imparts to Durga and her battles a reality belying her mythical character.

The third artistic device, very distinctive in the Durga compositions, is the metre chosen by the poet. The metre is short. It is called Sirkhaṇḍi Chhand and was used for the first time in Punjabi poetry by Guru Gobind Singh in *Caṇḍi di Vār*. A peculiar feature of this metre is the rhyme in the middle of the verse which produces a stairlike momentum. Within the symmetry of the short and rapid metre, remains a varied and flexible sound movement. This metre, and the words most apt to it and to the theme, Guru Gobind Singh uses with consummative artistry to recreate the tempo and excitement of the action. Just as Durga gallops triumphantly, so do the verses. An example:

karaki uthi rāṇi caṇḍi faujān dekh kai
dhūhi miānoṇ khaṇḍān, dhāi sāmhaṇe
sabhe bir saṅghāre, dhumar naiṇ de
janu lai katte āre, drakhat bādiā⁴⁰

Beholding the host, Rāṇi Caṇḍi (Durga) thundered.

Pulling out the sword from the sheath,

she dashed towards the demons.

All the warriors of Dhumar Naiṇ were slain,

Like wood sawn by the carpenter.⁴⁰

Durga's passion for challenge, the fierceness of contest, and the alacrity with which she vanquishes the demons, are projected through word-images and metrical rhythms of great beauty and power. The pauses in the narrative etch out well-marked climactic patterns. The rhythm and style of poetry are appropriate to the atmosphere, to the mood the poet wishes to evoke. Each verse, each word, each rhythmic tone, is instinct with martial fervour—the *raudra rasa*.

Guru Gobind Singh adopted such a dynamic art form with the object of inspiring bravery, dispelling cowardice, and infusing the hearts of his people with confidence and courage. It is significant that he chose from ancient mythology the she-figure of Durga. Guru Gobind Singh, it must be stated again, was not a devotee of the goddess. The Guru was but the devotee of the Transcendent

One Whose *rahimati* he is forever seeking.⁴¹ The tale of the invincible goddess was told artistically and powerfully in vivid image and in speedy metre and cadence. The cumulative effect of the visual and the aural poetry was stirring and invigorating.

MYTHOLOGICAL

The universe is made up of stories, not of atoms, said Muriel Rukeyser.⁴² At a psychologically and politically weak moment in the history of Indian society, Guru Gobind Singh deliberately evokes the myth of Durga. Mythology has been defined by James L. Jarrett as "ur-phenomenon," i.e. something which predates our sophisticated distinctions of literature, science, philosophy, religion, and dreams, but from which these very distinguishable activities arise. Jarrett sets apart five categories for myths: (1) stories (2) pre-science (3) primitive religion (4) primitive philosophy (5) collective dream.⁴³ Guru Gobind Singh's understanding of mythology falls in the first category. As was mentioned earlier, he regards the myth of Durga as a marvellous story (*kathā*) or tale (*bilās*). According to Max Muller, "mythology is history changed into fable or fable represented as history."⁴⁴ This is not Guru Gobind Singh's Conception of the myth. In his case, the mixing up of history and fable does not occur. Not history but sheer "fable" is the myth of Durga for the Guru.

Yet it is evident throughout his poetry that Gurū Gobind Singh was deeply conscious of the power of myth. Myths were for him, as for us today, what animates and directs us: faces this way or that, opens or closes our horizons, orients us or disorients us, enriches or impoverishes us.⁴⁵ Myths provide "the pattern to which growth may aspire."⁴⁶ They present us with "archetypes" which can act as images and role models to build self-esteem and encourage fulfilment of individual potential. The transformation from 'mythos' to 'ethos' was central to Guru Gobind Singh's perception: reading, hearing, reciting the myth of Durga, the inert society could be invigorated, the ethical principles could be contested for. The myth from the past held possibilities for the present, for the future.

From amongst all the myths of India—Hindu, Buddhist, Jaina—it is Durga who captures the poetic mind of Guru Gobind

Singh. The strong, courageous, independent Durga considered more an exception amongst Hindu goddesses by scholars of Sanskrit literature and mythology, is, by Guru Gobind, singled out as the model of moral force and martial prowess— for both men and women. Guru Gobind Singh's choice displays singular awareness of the intrinsic importance of the female. A contemporary scholar, Miriam Starhawk, regards the goddess image as positive model for the wholeness of the person—woman and man. According to her, the goddess inspires us to see our aggression as healthy and our anger as purifying.⁴⁷ The Sikh prophet too is conscious of the significance of "her" existence and power and of her relevance to the maintenance of harmony, morality, and justice. Where the male gods are vanquished, she comes out triumphant. She symbolizes the moral power to challenge the oppressive system. Her aggression is indeed healthy, her anger is indeed purifying. This affirmation of female power by Guru Gobind Singh illustrates the overall positive view of the woman in Sikh speculation. That there is nothing inferior or insidious about woman was enunciated resonantly by Guru Nanak as well. Not a hindrance, not a negative influence, she is necessary for the continuance of society and for the preservation of an ethical structure. She remains the paradigm, the criterion for identification for both men and women.

As the gods dethroned by the demons approach her for succour, the goddess readily consents to challenge the usurpers. Hearing their request, she laughs uproariously. She summons her riding lion, devourer of demons, and comforts the gods with the words: "*cinta karhu na kai*"⁴⁸— do not worry at all. And then

*roh hoi mahāmāi rākasi mārṇe*⁴⁹

Infuriated, the great mother (*mahā*)/great+māi/mother)

advances to kill the demons.

Durgā is presented here as the progenitor as well— the great mother — but she must proceed to punish and overcome evil. She charges single-handed with full fury into the ranks of the enemy. The well-equipped and deadly armies of the demons do not frighten her. Her loud laughter echoes throughout the battlefield indicating how she makes light of the hazards she faces and with what sovereign ease she confronts the enemy.

Her extraordinary physical strength is also the theme of a section of Guru Gobind Singh's composition, *Akāl Ustati*, wherein she is pictured as armour-clad from head to foot, with mighty white serpents coiled around her neck, hissing dreadfully at the foe.⁵⁰ Her hand-drum makes the sound of roaring tigers.⁵¹ She is riding a lion. The poet addresses her:

The sovereign deity on earth,
Enwrapped in all the regal pomp.
To you be victory,
O'you of mighty arms.⁵²

Here also the goddess' valorous deeds are described in vivid detail—how, for instance, she makes mincemeat of the demon Dhūma, slays Mahikhāsurā, and vanquishes their entire armies. Her offspring, Kālī, bursting forth from her forehead, gulps down the demons and elephants alike. Durga herself is skilled in the use of a hundred arms⁵³ and gives an astounding display of her martial prowess. The bulwark of righteousness, she moves back and forth fearlessly. Says Guru Gobind Singh:

*pāp bināsan dharam kare*⁵⁴

All sins you annihilate, and righteousness you countenance.

Guru Gobind Singh portrays Durga with all her Purāṇic power and charisma. Modern feminist writers such as Merlin Stone and Bella Debrida point out how the image of the female has been degraded. In "Ancient Mirrors of Womanhood," Merlin Stone cites several cross-cultural instances of the attempt by patriarchal structures to "suppress," "alter" and even "erase" the lustre of the female.⁵⁵ One is of the Sumerian depression of the most ancient creator goddess Nammu to the less effective Inana. Another instance is that of Kuan Yin, whose image may have been derived from the pre-Buddhist creator goddess Nu Kwa but who is described as having once been a male Bodhisattva who decided to return to earth as Kuan Yin. Merlin Stone also notes that the Arabian goddess Attar, associated with the Semitic Ishtar and the Egyptian Hathor, is described in later South Arabian inscriptions as a male deity.⁵⁶ Bella Debrida also makes the point in "Drawing from Mythology in Women's Quest for Selfhood," that while ancient mythology affirmed woman's power, those stories through patriarchal influence over the years have come to be "muted," "curtailed" and even

“preverted.”⁵⁷

Guru Gobind Singh's treatment of Durga is completely exempt from any such detraction. On the contrary, through his artistic sensibility and through the breathtaking opulence of imagery, the figure of the Purāṇic goddess and her heroic exploits have been handsomely magnified in this account. She appears here in all her legendary glory. In this recalling she has lost nothing of her dynamism and fire. The poet in fact believed that those qualities of hers were still capable of inspiring women and men to positive action to rid themselves of the disabilities they suffered.

The sociological, aesthetic, and mythological recalling of Durga by the tenth Guru has had major repercussions in Sikh affairs. Sikhs heard and recited this example of the goddess embodying courage and rational opposition to oppression. As history witnessed, men and women were charged by Guru Gobind Singh's literary resurrection of mythology and by the personal example with moral fervour and courage. The period is replete with heroic deeds and sacrifices of the Sikhs who fought valiantly against the mighty forces of the rulers of the day. Because of this sustained resistance, Sikh faith had become a political force within half a century of Guru Gobind Singh's passing away and a State in another forty years. In this period of great stress and strife, women stood side by side with men. Instance may be cited of Māi Bhāgo, of Amritsar district of the Punjab. Seeing how some of the Sikhs of her area had fled Anāṇdpur, the seat of Guru Gobind Singh, in face of privations of a prolonged siege, she chided them with pusillanimity. She led them back to fight for the Gurū, this time at Khidrānā, now Muktsar (December 19, 1705). She herself took part in the battle displaying feats of valour and skill. As Sikhs today hear and recite Guru Gobind Singh's aesthetic recollection of the Purāṇic goddess, they simultaneously reiterate Guru Nanak's understanding of Ultimate Reality: the name Durga etymologically signifies the unreachable one (*dur* = *difficult* + *gam* = *reach*). Also her being the single power against the hosts of contrary forces underscores the Sikh belief in the One Transcendent. Through “Durgā” then the Sikhs retain the Nanakian vision of the Inconceivable Absolute transcending all horizontal particularities.

NOTES

1. S.Radhakrishnan in his foreword to D.P. Ashta, *The Poetry of the Dasam Granth* (New Delhi: Arun Prakashan, 1959)
2. *Kabiovāc benti chaupai*, in *Nitnem Stik* (Amritsar : Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1977), p. 205
3. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 81-94. These sections now exist as an independent scripture, *Devī-Māhātmyam*. See Vasudeva S. Agrawala, *Devī-Māhātmyam: The Glorification of the Great Goddess* (All India Kashiraj Trust, 1963)
4. D. P. Ashta, *The Poetry of the Dasam Granth*, p. 38
5. Trilochan Singh *The Sikh Review* (May 1955), p. 34
6. *Caṇḍi Caritra* in *Śabdārth: Dasam Granth Sahib*, vol. 1 (Patiala: Punjabi Universtiy, 1973), p. 92
7. *Akāl Ustati*, (Amritsar: Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, 1969) p. 1.
8. Kapur Singh, *Baisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh*, p. 5.
9. *Śabda Hazāre*, 4
10. *Śabdārath: Dasam Granth Sāhib*, vol. 1, p. 154
11. *Sri Mukhibāk Swaiya*, 15
12. *Akāl Ustati*, 69-70
13. Opening of *Caṇḍi Caritra*, *Śabdārath Dasam Granth Sahib*, vol. 1, p. 92
14. *Caṇḍi Caritra*, 6
15. *Ibid.*, 23
16. Cornelia Dimmitt and J.A.B. van Buitenen (eds), *Classical Hindu Mythology: A Reader in the Sanskrit Purāṇās* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978), p. 221
17. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 2.11-2.18
18. *Classical Hindu Mythology*, p. 226
19. *Akāl Ustati*, p. 212
20. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, 7.5 (Agrawala), p. 98
21. *Ibid.*, 5.32, p. 83
22. *Ibid.*, 5.11, p. 79
23. Professor S.H. Nasr, lecture on "What is Metaphysics?" Gifford Lecture delivered at Temple Universtiy, Philadelphia, U.S.A., March 18, 1981
24. *Vār Durgā Ki*, 231
25. Ananda Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (Harvard, 1935), p. 52
26. *Ibid.*
27. Translated by Professor Harbans Singh in *Aspects of Punjabi Literature* (Ferozepore: Bawa Publishing House, 1961), p. 86
28. *Akāl Ustati*, 218
30. *Ibid.*, 194
31. Ashta. *The Poetry of the Dasam Granth*, p. 259
32. *Caṇḍi Caritra*, 157

33. *Vār Durgā Kī*, 48
34. *Caṇḍi Caritra*, 157.
35. *Vār Durgā*, Kī, 52.
36. *Ibid.*, 15.
37. *Caṇḍi Caritra*, 161-62
38. *Vār Durgā Kī*, 32
39. *Ibid.*, II: 133-138
40. *Vār Durgā Kī*, 27
41. From the Arabic form *raḥimah*, the term *raḥimati* is used by Guru Gobind Singh to great aesthetic and meaningful effect. In Ibn al' Arabī's speculations, the basic meaning of the term is womb, the meaning of mercy being derivative. See Ibn al' Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R.W.J. Austin, *The Classics of Western Spirituality* (Paulist Press, 1980), p. 29. Connections are also made in Hebrew between the word *rachum* or *racham*, usually translated compassion, and the word for womb (*racham* or *rechem*). See Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia : Fortress, 1978), pp. 31-59, and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, *The Divine Feminine: The Biblical Imagery of God as Female* (Crossroad, 1983) pp. 15-19.
42. Cited by Siew Hwa Beh in "Growing up with Legends of the Chinese Swords Women," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, (ed) Charlene Spretnak (Anchor/Doubleday, 1982), p. 121.
43. James L. Jarrett, *The Quest for Beauty* (Prentice-Hall , Inc., 1957)
44. Max Muller, *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (London: Longman's Green, 1873), p. 352
45. Amos Niven Wilder, *Theopoetic: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (Philadelphia : Fortress, 1976). Chapter 6, "Theopoetic and Mythopoetic", pp. 73-100
46. Charlene Spretnak in her introduction to the "Mythic Heroes as Models of Strength and Wisdom," in *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, p. 90.
47. According to Starhawk, "The importance of the Goddess (symbol for women cannot be overstressed. The image of the Goddess) inspires women to see ourselves as divine, our bodies as sacred, the changing phases of our lives as holy, our aggression as healthy, our anger as purifying, and our power to nurture and create, but also to limit and destroy when necessary, as the very force that sustains all life. Through the Goddess, we can discover our strength, enlighten our minds, own our bodies, and celebrate our emotions. We can move beyond narrow, constricting roles and become whole." *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, p. 51. In Guru Gobind Singh's perception, the goddess would inspire both women and men.
48. *Vār Durgā Kī*, 5
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Akāl Ustati*, 216
51. *Ibid.*, 213
52. *Ibid.*, 212

- 53. *Ibid.*, 220
- 54. *Ibid.*, 215
- 55. In *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, pp. 91-96
- 56. *Ibid.*, p. 96
- 57. Bella Debrida further states: "Once we begin to delve into the mythology, we find that it has been perverted. A deliberate selection process has determined who our female models may be, and those few models have been twisted to serve patriarchal aims. By discovering our true mythological roots we can demystify, inspire, remythicize them; we can reclaim the power usurped by patriarchal control; we can begin to fill the overwhelming need for female models of strength and wisdom so lacking in contemporary culture." *The Politics of Women's Spirituality*, p. 142.

THEMATIC STUDY OF BACHITRA NĀṬAK*

JODH SINGH

The *Bachitra Nāṭak*, a part of the *Dasam Granth*, is a voluminous composition covering the *Chañḍi Charitra*, *Chañḍi Charitra Uktibilās* and *Chaubis Autār*, besides the 'autobiography' of Guru Gobind Singh, along with the genealogy of the poet. This paper, instead of looking into why it is called the *Bachitra Nāṭak* (the wondrous drama), or whether the heading fits in with the content, makes an endeavour to ponder over some of the thematic aspects of the monumental work attributed to Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Master.

At the very outset, the poet bows before the 'double edged sword' clearly invoking the all-powerful Lord saying: "O Sword, I can complete this volume only if you help me." In the medieval and post-medieval period, the tradition of invoking evil-destroyer Ganesha and *Sitār*-playing Sarsvati was there, but invocation to the Sword is a new phenomenon created by the Guru. (The lines read: "*namaskār sri kharag kau karau su hit chit lāi; pūran karau giranth ih tum muhi karahu sahāi.*")¹ The juxtaposing of *śāstra* and *śāstra*, i.e. the sword and the book, was a wonderful experiment which was carried on successfully upon the Indian masses by the Guru-poet, during the seventeenth century.

The doctrines evolved from the *Rgveda* had been so distorted and put forth by people with vested interests, that the Indians got divided into several castes and sub-castes. *Śramaṇic* culture remained a parallel force to the Vedic culture, but later, Buddhism also got divided into the Hinayāna and the Mahāyāna and their subsects. Hinduism and Buddhism became so marrowless that the

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Indian masses accustomed to nourishing upon the vital energy of religion, started feeling themselves as totally wretched and helpless. The great Śaṅkara, though drove away Buddhism with the help of his brilliant discourses and debates, as an alternative, could not give but the long queues of the recluses who had nothing to do with the actual sorrows and sufferings of the people. Consequently, we find in the Indian history that invaders numbering a few hundred would sneak into India and go non-stop right up to Somnath in the south, Nalanda in the remote east, to loot and plunder gold and diamonds. Schisms owing to the artificial classification of the people on the one hand and hypocrisy in the spiritual life on the other, not only took away the self-respect of the people but also made them realize that neither the Śramanic life, or the life of repudiation, nor the life of spiritual flights through Vedānta, Sāṅkhya-Yoga-Kaivalya and Mimāṃsa rituals is helpful in leading a life of honour and self-respect.

Finally, the Sikh Gurūs by creating saint-soldier personality of Khalsa, made a positive contribution to the Indian philosophical thought and military expertise. For the first time in India, the Gurus encouraged the (so far considered impossible) blend of spirituality and temporality in one human personality. To eliminate the difference of high and low Guru Gobind Singh served *amrit* (nectar) to the washerman, water-carrier, farmer, barber and the *khatri*, in the same iron bowl, and thus accomplished a marvellous feat of uplifting the so-called lowly persons in the society, and offered them a living full of self-respect and piety. The consequent history of India delineates the Khalsa working as a cementing rock at the north-western boundaries of India with a view to putting an end to the invading campaigns of the marauders.

For doing this all a long-sustained movement was initiated by Guru Nanak, in the fifteenth century. His foremost emphasis was on Truth and the life of truthfulness. His *Sidha Gosti* opens with the concern for those who were trying to become truthful and pure by undertaking pilgrimages alone. The Guru averred that without reclining in the 'true word', no one could ever attain liberation.² In *Vār Āsā*, he puts emphasis upon the fact that 'truth' is the panacea for all maladies and it is truth alone which washes away

the dirt of all the sins committed.³ In Sikhism much exercise has been undertaken to make people understand that the first ever name of the one and the only one *Oṅkār* is *Sat(i)*, i.e. Truth.⁴ Guru Arjan Dev further affirms the same when he says: "All your prevalent names are based upon your actions; but your real, primordial name defining your nature, is *Sat(i)*."⁵ The same truth, as coming down to the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, could not remain a passive virtue as it was in the hands of ancient *r̥ṣis* and ascetics; it turned out to be the double-edged Sword, the saviour of saints and destroyer of the evil, a symbol of the supreme truth of the brotherhood of mankind and fatherhood of one Supreme Being. Guru Gobind Singh invokes the Sword further in *Bachitra Nāṭak* when he says : "This sword cuts into pieces and destroys the hordes of evil-doers and remains to be the inner force of the battlefield. This is the undivided prowess of the arms; its light is enormous and its glory is like a sun. This sword is the bestower of bliss upon saints and destroyer of ill-will and evil propensities. I hail this Power and surrender before its majesty, which is the origin of this whole world."⁶

The second conspicuous aspect of the *Bachitra Nāṭak* is its exposition of the term *dharma* ((religion)). Religion, whether one has faith in it or not, has definitely influenced one and all. It is rightly said that the study of mankind will be incomplete without the study of religion. To have belief in religion is altogether a personal quality of man, and despite many a similarity between man and animal the basic distinction between the two is marked by the fact that man is known as religious entity whereas the animal, though generally behaves instinctively, is devoid of religiosity. To quote *Manusmṛti* : "*na māṁsabhakṣaṇe doṣo na madye na ca maithune*, i.e. eating flesh or drinking wine or enjoying sexual intercourse, is not sinful,"⁷ because there is nothing in that which is contrary to the rule of nature. These are the inherent tendencies of all the created beings. But the *dharma* consists of controlling the passions arising out of the unrestricted actions of the senses, so that the welfare and order of the society is maintained. A verse in the *Mahābhārata* declares : "Eating, sleeping, fear and sexual relationship are the heritage of men, same as of animals; *dharma* dis-

tinguishes man from beast and those devoid of the sense of *dharma* may be looked upon as beasts.”⁸

In his composition, *Japu*, Guru Nanak probes into the nature of *dharma*. The *dharma* here is conceived as emanating from compassion which is further rooted in contentment.⁹ In the understanding of the Guru’s conception of *dharma*, one basic fact to be accepted is that with the help of air, water, fire etc., this earth as the abode of *dharma* has been created.¹⁰ *Dharma* is directly connected with the inner life of man which consists of discerning wisdom, pious feelings and restrained actions. However, commonly the term *dharma* is used to imply the path leading to ‘happiness’ in the next world. But, according to B.G. Tilak, the word *dharma* is not to be understood in such a restricted meaning; it is very often used for indicating the worldly morality as in the phrases *rājdharma* (duty of a king), *deśadharma* (the duty of a country) and *mitradharma* (one’s duty as a friend) etc. If these two meanings of the word *dharma* are to be individually explained, the *dharma* relating to the life after death may be called *mokṣa dharma* or simply *mokṣa* and the *dharma* relating to this worldly life, i.e. ethics, may be given the name of *dharma* simply. For instance, in enumerating the four ideals of man (*puruṣārthas*), we say *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. If *mokṣa* (release) could be included in the first word *dharma*, then it would not have been necessary to mention *mokṣa* as an independent ideal at the end.¹¹ Therefore, *dharma* means truthful living which may be helpful in attaining *mokṣa*, but, primarily, the term denotes ethical values and good conduct.

Guru Gobind Singh in his *Bachitra Nāṭak* puts emphasis on the rectitudinal aspect of religion. *Dharma* is considered by him a working and practical activity of life, and by not accepting it merely as a concept, he indirectly inspires his followers to firmly adhere to the pivot of truth already affirmed by the earlier Gurus. He views the martyrdom of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, in the same perspective: “He underwent a great martyrdom for the sake of *dharma*; offered his head for it, but did not give up his insistence on truth.”¹² Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed himself in order to spread and extend the humanitarian outlook and universal truth. He did not visualize a society devoid of *dharma*, but a society which should be

dharma sāpekṣa, i.e. with a sense of *dharma*, but *pakṣapāta nirpekṣa*, i.e. devoid of prejudices and biases Guru Gobind Singh is quite conscious about his role here on earth, which he explains in his autobiography by saying :

The motive of my coming to the world is religion (*dharma*), and for the same the Lord has sent me : Go, and spread *dharma* there and throw down the forces generated by the profane. O saints be clear about the fact that to get the wheel of *dharma* moving, to protect the saints and destroy the roots of evil-committers, I have been born on this earth.¹³

As alluded to above, in the Indian literature, *dharma* has been accepted as the cardinal pillar of life. The ancient sages counted ten characteristics of religion which can be adorned by people without prejudice or difficulty. These are : steadiness, forgiveness, control, non-stealing, purity, subjugation of the senses, intellect, education, truth and being devoid of wrath.¹⁴ These ten characteristics of *dharma* can prove to be ornaments for anybody. To those who were oblivious of the essence of *dharma* and were committing sins in the name of spiritual elevation, Guru Gobind Singh had to say in his *Bachitra Nāṭak* : "O animal (in the shape of man) you don't recognize Him whose glory is scattered in the three worlds. You worship such lords (idols) whose worship takes you away from the next world. You commit sins of the so-called spiritual elevation (*parmārtha*) in such a manner that sins even get ashamed of themselves. O fool, get down to the feet of the Almighty who is not there in these stones."¹⁵

Going deep into the reasons for the religious fanaticism and hatred, the author of *Bachitra Nāṭak* asserts that turning of one's eyes away from the truth for grinding one's own axe is the main reason for communal hatred : "The great men created by the Lord engaged in setting up their own sects. They preached to everyone their own name, instead of *satinām*, the truthful name (of God). They behaved like that potter who praises only his own pots. Nobody recognized the Supreme Lord (*parbrahman*)."¹⁶ In the background of this, Guru Gobind Singh defined religion as love, as non-suppression of conscience and in terms of repudiation of biased attitude, matted hairs, *mudras* (different postures) and guises. Without realizing God in every granule, the worship of the stones is not religious act, according to the Guru. He does not consider

the matted hair and ear-rings as the ingredients of religion. He declares in the *Bachitra Nāṭak* :

As told by God I will tell one and all without any modesty. I will not recognize any particular garb, and will sow the seeds of the Name of the invisible Lord. I will neither be stone-worshipper nor will I prefer any particular guise. I will sing the praises of Lord and attain Him.¹⁷

The third major aspect of this work is the reiteration by Guru Gobind Singh of the fact that 'one divine light' worked in all the earlier Gurus who passed it on to their respective successors. The first written document affirming this is the verse by Rai Balvand and Satta the Dum, sung in measure Ramkali, included in the Gurū Granth Sāhib by Guru Arjan Dev himself. Then come the works (*Vārān*) of Bhai Gurdas, the amanuensis engaged by the fifth Guru in the compilation of the Guru Granth. In *Rāmakali ki Vār* by Rai Balvand and Satta, it is explicitly held that 'the same' is light same is the methodology, only the bodies have changed—*Joti ohā jugati sāi sahi kīā pheri palaṭia*.¹⁸ In this context, one is reminded of the oft-levelled charge that Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh got deviated from the peaceful saintly path shown by the other Gurus and they almost reversed the ideology preached by Gurū Nanak Dev. Some misguided people somehow consider the goals of the first five Gurus and those of Guru Gobind Singh as poles apart. But an indepth study of the Guru Granth and other relevant literature does not testify to this contention.

That Guru Nanak was an epoch-making great spiritual leader is a fact, but besides preaching the importance of compassionate humility, service and altruism to his disciples he exhorts his followers to inculcate the spirit of taking their 'heads on their palms' in order to realize love and to protect the nation, humanity and one's self-respect.¹⁹ Guru Angad also states the fact that though the acknowledged way of life of the yogis is cultivation of *Parā Vidyā*, that of the Brahmins is the inculcation of Vedic knowledge and in case of Kṣatriyas and Śūdras is the engagement in warfare and service respectively. In view of the demands of the time it is imperative for all to undertake all these tasks so that the national as well as humanitarian spirit may be aroused to unite the people. No work should be a prerogative of a particular community. He further bows before him who realizes this mystery.²⁰ Kabir whose

hymns have been incorporated in the Guru Granth, also proclaims him a true warrior who, being duty-conscious and full of struggle, never turns his back to the battlefield (both inner and outer) even though his body is shred to pieces.²¹

Thus it can be said that the steel of humility, good conduct and rocklike composure was supplied by Guru Nanak and other Gurus, of which sword of the Khalsa (the destroyer of evil and showerer of bliss for the saints) was made by Guru Gobind Singh. The textual study of the *Bachitra Nāṭak* also reveals that Guru Gobind Singh himself finds his practical tasks quite in tune with the conceptual framework put forth by the earlier nine Gurus. He confirms the theory of one divine light present in all the Gurūs who were generally misunderstood by the people having their own vested interests :

Sri Nānak came to be known Angad and Amar Das got identified as Angad. It was Amar Das who was called Ram Das. This mystery was unfolded to the saints, whereas the fools could not know it. The commoners knew them different and there were very few who recognized them as one spirit and form... When Ram Das merged in the Absolute, the Guruship he attributed to (Guru) Arjan, who having gone to the abode of the Lord established Harigobind on the seat of Guruship. When Hargobind became one with the Supreme, Har Rai sat in his place. His son (successor) was Hari Krishan from whom came Tegh Bahadur.²²

A few more aspects of the dynamic thought of Guru Gobind Singh are obvious in the second and third chapter of the *Bachitra Nāṭak*. How the world came into being and the evolution of the *sodhi* dynasty took place right from Raghu to Rama onward, is the subject-matter of these chapters. As told in the Guru Granth Sahib, the author of the Dasam Granth also accepts Onkar as the root-cause of whole creation : "When the Almighty first spread his Self, He created the world out of Onkār."²³ The poet, by linking his lineage to Rama and his ancestors, in a way confirms his roots in the Indian soil on the one hand, and on the other implicitly holds that these ancient people could not prevail upon the evil designs of the wrong-doers for want of a composite character of spirituality and temporality in one person. Secondly, we find in the text that the gods and demons are not treated as separate categories, as are held the four castes (*varṇas*) of Hinduism. Those with virtuous

and meritorious acts, are called gods (*devatās*) and those involved in evil deeds are known as *asuras* or demons. Thus the Guru does not deny the opportunity to the demons to become gods and likewise every possibility is seen of the coming down of the so-called gods. He says : "Those men who perform virtuous deeds are known as gods in this world. Those who commit bad deeds come to be called demons."²⁴

The present-day crises are anticipated by Guru Gobind Singh in his description of the evolution of Sodhi dynasty. A considerable detail of the infighting of the Kalketu, Kāldhvaj, Raghu, Rāma, Lava, Kuśa, Kālket, Kāl Rāi and Sodhi Rāi etc., has been provided by the Guru in these chapters of the *Bachitra Nāṭak*. He, at places, analyses a few basic reasons for the quarrels among these families. He says, the ego of the family went on fattening. "The greed has become the main motivating force which makes people think that others should perish so that everything could be grabbed."²⁵ What was the result of the fights of the progenies of Lava and Kuśa? What consequence they met with, who were the successors of the *chakravarti* Emperors?—"Only twenty villages they could retain in which they were tilling and ploughing when Guru Nanak was born in this family."²⁶ May God bless the people of Punjab with the vision to see what happens to the generations of ruling families, as depicted in the *Bachitra Nāṭak*.

NOTES

1. *Dasam Granth : Bachitra Nāṭak*, 1.1
2. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 938
3. *Ibid.*, p. 468
4. *Ibid.*, p. 1. "Ik Ōṅkār Satināma..."
5. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 1083
6. *Dasam Granth : Bachitra Nāṭak*, 1.2
7. *Manusmṛiti*, 5.6
8. *Mahābhārata Śāntiparva*, 294. 92)
9. *Gurū Granth Sahib*, p. 3
10. *Ibid.*, p. 7
11. *Gīta Rahasya* (3rd edition Hindi), p. 64
12. *Dasam Granth, Bachitra Nāṭak*, 5. 14
13. *Ibid.*, 6. 42.

14. "*dhr̥tikṣmadamoasteyam saucam indriyanigrah dhirvidya satyam akrodho daskam dharmam lakṣaṇam.*"
15. *Dasam Granth : Bachitra Nāṭak*, p. 1. 99
16. *Ibid.*, 6, 27, 28
17. *Ibid.*, 6, 34, 35
18. *Gurū Granth Sāhib*, p. 966
19. *Ibid.*, p. 1412
20. *Ibid.*, p. 469
21. *Ibid.*, p. 1105
22. *Dasam Granth : Bachitra Nāṭak*, 5. 9-13
23. *Ibid.*, 2. 10
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*, 2. 36
26. *Ibid.* 5.3.

SCHOLASTIC AND DIALOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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SCHOLARLY STUDY OF SIKHISM*

HARBANS SINGH

Sikhism, the last so far of world's major religions, compels scholarly attention for a variety of reasons. First, because of its age itself, or the time of its origin. Apart from being the harbinger of intimations comparatively new, Sikhism is significant especially from sociological and reconciliatory points of view. It was born at a time when two important religions—Hinduism and Islam—had lived on the Indian soil in sharp conflict with each other for several centuries. How Sikhism attempted to steer a course between the two, evolving in this process a distinct individuality of its own and how it gained adherents at a time when the hold on people's minds of older, highly institutionalized, religions was stronger than ever should be an interesting study.

Equally interesting is the intensity of performance of this faith during its comparatively short span and the far-reaching changes it brought about in the social structure in northern India. Beginning as a spiritual, monotheistic and ethical faith with the prophecy of Guru Nanak, it gradually developed into a cohesive and well-marked order with a deeply humanitarian and social outlook. The seed in Guru Nanak's teaching flowered under the care of nine succeeding prophets. This, again, is something peculiar in the history of religion — ten spiritual Masters, succeeding one another, regarded with equal adoration and honour by the followers as manifesting and articulating the same spirit and prophecy. Each contributed towards the evolution of the creed and the civil organization in accordance with the inner dynamism of the ministry inaugurated by the First Guru, or Prophet-teacher, and with the exigencies of

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contemporary social environment.

Pressed by the growing intolerance of the ruling authority, the Sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind, taught the use of arms. Seeing how peaceable means had failed to secure the rising sect from oppression and how his predecessor, the Fifth Guru, had to pay the extreme penalty for his religious conviction, he recognized recourse to the sword a lawful alternative.

The Ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, again, bore the cross and suffered martyrdom by execution. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last of the Sikh Gurus, brought to consummation the work started by Guru Nanak. He initiated the martial and casteless fellowship of the Khalsa to which came people from all classes and sections of society, the high-born, the peasants and the so-called lowly Sudras.

A prolonged spell of fierce persecution followed the death of Guru Gobind Singh. Suffering brought power. Under Ranjit Singh (1780-1839), the Sikhs established a strong kingdom in the Punjab. This eventually fell to internal machinations and the onrush of British conquest. A reformatory current towards the end of the last century attempted to recover the essence and purity of Sikh teaching submerged in the splendour of power and further debased in the confusion and recession resulting from its dissolution.

This renaissance movement called the Singh Sabha gave rise to a vigorous protest against the control of the Sikh holy places by an effete and corrupt priesthood which had introduced dogma and ritual so unambiguously rejected by the Gurus. The movement for the reformation of Sikh Gurdwaras became in the end a struggle against the British who took the part of the priestly custodians. The Singh Sabha and the Gurdwara movement opened the doors of modern progress for the Sikhs. The scope of the nationalist movement in the Punjab was widened and the Sikhs in India and abroad, especially on the Western coast of the United States, became the spearhead of the revolutionary struggle against foreign rule in the country.

In this graph covering a period of some 450 years, the Sikhs turned from a saintly and pacifist group into a vigorous and martial order, suffered persecution continuously for more than a half-

century, established a strong and picturesque monarchy, suffered deterioration and eclipse and then found again their moral and social anchorage. Besides the historical vicissitudes, the story has much sociological interest.

Worthy of simultaneous exploration is the Scripture, the Guru Granth. It has certain distinctive features. It is a direct record of the Gurus' word. The first copy as compiled by Guru Arjun, the Fifth Guru, is still preserved in a family of descendants at Kartarpur. The Holy Book was catholically designed: besides his own hymns and those of his predecessors, the Guru included in it utterances of some of the saints and sufis, Hindu as well as Muslim. These latter have for the Sikhs the same meaning and sanctity as the hymns of the Gurus. The Guru Granth brings to a point of concordance the various thought-streams then current in the country giving it a specific philosophic framework and sums up the *ethos* and experience of medieval India as no other work does. It, for the first time, turned to literary use the language of the people of the area, i.e., Punjabi, and gave it its script, Gurmukhi. This underlines its linguistic and cultural significance. Guru Gobind Singh, when ending the succession of personal Gurus, invested the Granth with Guruship. It has since been venerated as such and any five Sikhs, representing a congregation, with the Guru Granth in their midst, have the Guru's authority for deciding matters of communal and religious importance. What part has this feeling of the Guru's constant presence among them and the responsibility entrusted to them played in the affairs of the Sikhs is an interesting question.

Then, some of the characteristics of the Sikhs as a people—their deep attachment to their faith (there are some professedly believing Sikhs even among those formally converted to Marxian way of thinking), their enterprising and practical outlook and their elan and *joi de vivre*. They are known for their avidity for soldiering and farming and for their wanderlust. Among the characteristics of Sikh society may also be mentioned equality among the sexes and a democratic communal functioning. The Sikhs' highest ecclesiastical body is formed by elections on the basis of state-wide adult franchise, conducted under government auspices every five years. This, again, is something peculiar to them. The Sikhs'

institutions, practices and insignia and symbols, singularly distinguishable and strictly observable, their mental, moral and cultural makeup, their religious tradition and their social principles and participation open up an interesting and meaningful field of study.

The first published work on the Sikhs, in any language, appeared in 1788. That was 80 years after the passing away of Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs had outlived nearly three generations of persecution and were establishing themselves in possession of the Punjab in the wake of the disintegration of Mughal hegemony. The East India Company were watchful of their growing influence and Governor-General Warren Hastings charged his minister at the Delhi court, Major James Browne, with collecting information about them. In 1783 Major Browne came by a manuscript, in Devanagari, on the history of the Sikhs and had it rendered into Persian. He himself made an English translation from the Persian and published it, with an introduction under the title *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks*. The word Sikhs, it may be marked, has been spelt here as "S-i-c-k-s". This is nothing surprising considering what odd combinations and permutations of the English alphabet have been tried to write this word: twenty-two different spellings have been counted in the English writing of those early days, including such precious varieties as "S-e-y-q-u-e" "S-e-c-k", "S-e-e-k," "S-i-k-e," "S-h-i-k," and "S-i-c." Browne's account is historical in nature, but sketchy and inaccurate at places. His own description, in the Introduction, of the Sikhs' manners and customs is both lively and penetrating and his anticipation of their future importance for what he called "the administration of Bengal" was evidence of his sound political judgement.

This kind of diplomatic curiosity prompted a considerable body of English writing about the Sikhs and their country and religion. In the despatches and memoranda of English officers, the memoirs and diaries of travellers and adventures who came to the Punjab attracted by stories of the grandeur and hospitality of Ranjit Singh's court (George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, 1798, Victor Jacquemont, *Letters from India*, 1834, Charles Hugel, *Travels in Cashmere and the Punjab, containing a particular account of the Government and Character of the Sikhs*, 1845,

etc.) and in the account of some of the European employees of the Sikh court (Steinbach, *The Punjab being a Brief account of the country of the Sikhs*, 1845, John Martin Honigberger, *Thirty-Five Years in the East*, 1852, Alexander Gardner, *Memoirs*, 1898, etc.), we come across references to the Sikhs and their religious and national characteristics. There were also some more regular essays published such as Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs*, 1812, H.T. Prinsep's *The Origin of the Sikh Power in the Punjab*, 1834, and W.L.M'Gregor's *The History of the Sikhs*, 1846.

The first serious study of the Sikhs came in 1849. This was the work of Joseph Davey Cunningham who was a Captain in the army of the East India Company and spent eight years of his Indian service on political assignments on the Sikh frontier. He explored the available sources of information with the meticulousness of a scholar. Besides official despatches and documents and the earlier English accounts, he went to the basic material and acquainted himself with the Sikh scriptures as well as relevant manuscripts in Persian and Punjabi. The emphasis, in the *History* by Cunningham, shifted from his predecessors' concern with the assessment of the Sikh political and military strength or the description of the manner of their court to the identification of the ingredients of their moral and religious inspiration and of the driving force behind their rise from a religious sect to nationhood. The book is also significant for its account of the geography, economy and racial constituents of the people of the Punjab and of the social setting in which Sikhism was born. Elaborate footnotes and appendices show the minuteness and variety of Cunningham's learning. His style of writing has an imperishable quality and he reads so interestingly even today. The perspective of objectivity maintained throughout, especially when dealing with British policy towards the Sikhs at the time of the first Anglo-Sikh war (1845), confirms Cunningham's scholastic credentials. This is remarkable in one who was so closely involved with events he was writing of: of course, this did earn him official displeasure resulting in a setback to his career.

Another noticeable work is the English translation of portions of the Scripture, the Guru Granth, by Dr Ernest Trumpp, a

German Orientalist. He was commissioned by the India Office in 1869 to make the translation. The Punjab had by then been annexed to British dominions. Dr Trumpp who had made a study of the medieval Indian languages came and lived in the Punjab to learn Punjabi. To his translation he added English versions of two of Guru Nanak's traditional life-stories, with brief accounts of the following Gurus, an analysis of the religious system of the Sikhs and a note on the language and the poetic metres used in the Guru Granth. Trumpp's approach was not free from prejudice and he never came to form that sympathy and appreciation for the religion he was studying and its canon which are essential for understanding a religious faith and tradition. His pejorative remarks about their scriptural texts gave offence to Sikh sentiment and the book, published in 1877, never commanded much respect among scholars.

To make up for the imperfections of Trumpp's work and to indemnify the hurt it had caused to the Sikhs, a Punjab civilian, Max Arthur Macauliffe, undertook to make a translation on his own. He resigned from the Indian Civil Service to devote himself to this task. He learnt several Indian languages, including Sanskrit, Persian, Marathi and Punjabi, and immersed himself in Sikh lore. With the help of some hereditary *Gianis*, or interpreters of the sacred texts, he worked the Granth Sahib through (1430 pages in folio), not once but several times. He rendered most of it into English, added life histories of the Gurus to the translation of the Scripture and had the work published in 1909 by Oxford University Press in six stout volumes, with the title *The Sikh Religion*. Historically, Macauliffe's translation is very important. It attempted to arrive at and record a broad consensus from the diverse schools of scriptural interpretation as coming down the generations through verbal tradition. His accounts of Gurus' lives are not based on critical research, but, by and large, on old mythopoetic Sikh cycles. This was due to his extra sensitiveness to Sikh opinion which did inhibit the style and scope of his study. Nevertheless, Macauliffe's work remains the best introduction to the early period of Sikhs' history and to their sacred writings, unsuperseded so far in its scholarship.

By this time, English education had spread to the Punjab and the Sikhs, passing through a process of moral and intellectual awakening, started rediscovering their religious inheritance. Books, Journals and tractarian writing began to appear. Among the pioneers was Bhagat Lakshman Singh, who started a Sikh weekly journal in English called *The Khalsa* in 1899 and published his *Life of Guru Gobind Singh* in 1909. Sewaram Singh published his *The Critical Study of the Life and Teachings of Siri Guru Nanak Dev* in 1904, and Khazan Singh his *The History and Philosophy of Sikh Religion* in 1914.

In maturer intellectual and literary idiom were the essays on the Gurus and their religion by Sardul Singh Caveeshar and Sir Jogendra Singh. Puran Singh's accounts of the Gurus' lives in his *The Book of the Ten Masters*, 1926, have wide popular appeal: so have his exquisite translations of Sikh poetry (*Sisters of the Spinning Wheel*, 1921). This writing on the whole was more adulatory and expository than scholastic. More discriminating studies came in the next phase which started in the thirties with some university men taking to Sikh letters. This period was dominated by Bhai Jodh Singh, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh all of whom were then at the Khalsa College at Amritsar. The two former devoted themselves to Sikh theology and taught this subject at the college. Ganda Singh's speciality was Sikh history which he studied with a rigorous scholarly discipline. The Sikhs' history, more than their theology and philosophy, became the subject of study by academics. Sita Ram Kohli made a painstaking study of the period of Ranjit Singh. Hari Ram Gupta covered the latter half of the seventeenth century in his well-known books on Sikh history. On the Gurus, the work of Indubhusan Banerjee was unequalled for its historical erudition and reasoning. Mention must also be made of a thesis of an earlier date, Gokal Chand Narang's *Transformation of the Sikhs*, 1912, still in print and extensively read and quoted. To the Khalsa College which then occupied a central place in Sikh learning came, in 1937, John Clark Archer of Yale, the first and, so far, the last American scholar to make a sustained study of Sikhism—i.e., not counting Dr Löchlin who has lived in the Land

of Five Rivers long and vitally enough to have become a Punjabi. The literary resources in Amritsar and his personal contact with Bhai Jodh Singh and Ganda Singh provided the required material and stimulus. The result of this labour was a book entitled *The Sikhs* published in 1946 by Princeton University Press. It set out to study Sikhism "as a venture in the reconciliation of religions," and described its doctrines, institutions and places of worship in relation to contiguous faiths, such as Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. In spite of the diligent and direct investigation he made, Archer's conclusions were tentative: and, what is even more surprising, his facts went awry at too many places.

Comparative study is a feature also of that very admirable book *The Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib* by Duncan Greenlees published, in 1952, by the Theosophical Publishing House in their World Gospel Series. This work contains a most lucid statement of the Sikh doctrine, and, with its translation of portions of the Guru Granth, including Guru Nanak's *Japuji*, which represents the kernel of Sikh thought and metaphysics, and a 200-page historical essay, it ranks as the best compendium of Sikhism available. To Sikhs themselves it is wholly acceptable which shows that Greenlees was able to sympathetically and fully grasp his subject.

In the same literary lineage, though not as well organized, is C.H. Loehlin's *The Sikhs and Their Scriptures*. He has lived among the Sikhs for more than 30 years and depicts them and their religious heritage with manifest understanding. This book also makes a comparative study of Sikhism with neighbouring faiths, but attempts to take in too many aspects in a small compass to give an exhaustive treatment.

III

In recent years the most scholarly work on Sikhs has come from the pen of one born to the faith. This is *Parasharprasna*, by Kapur Singh, which sets out the individual character of Sikhism in the perspective of Indian religious thought. Kapur Singh, vastly learned in Indian and Semitic theology and in the modern philosophical and scientific knowledge, has worked out his thesis with his characteristic intellectual finesse and his vigorous and persua-

sive English style. *Our Heritage*, by Narain Singh, treats of the basic tenets of Sikhism in a cogent and authentic manner. Monumental in design and execution is an English translation by Gopal Singh of the entire Guru Granth, published in 1960. In the same year was published, under the auspices of UNESCO, an anthology of the scriptural texts, carefully made and equally carefully rendered into English by a council of five Sikh scholars, Trilochan Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh, Kapur Singh, Bawa Harkrishan Singh and Khushwant Singh.

With Khushwant Singh, the Sikh writing attains colour as well as sophistication. His *History of the Sikhs*, in two volumes, at which he worked under a fellowship created by the Rockefeller Foundation at Aligarh University, has been published by Princeton University Press. This book spans the entire course of the history of the Sikh people in an intimate and vivid manner. Although Khushwant Singh has in recent years done more than perhaps any other scholar to foster the cult of Sikh history, he studiously maintains an attitude of detachment and of reverence for fact. For this reason, his *History* is a reliable account and is the only book on the subject which will be read with interest by the layman as well as the cognoscente.

A book which must, in time, establish itself as a significant work of interpretation is Gurbachan Singh Talib's *Guru Gobind Singh's Impact on Indian Society*, published by the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, in 1967. This is a study which goes to the roots of Sikhism and examines its historical role with a penetrating and critical eye. The subject has been treated under five main points, i.e., the idea of God, evolution of the heroic character, invoking India's heroic tradition, religion viewed as universal brotherhood and Apostolate to the people. In building up his thesis, the author relies more on practical and sociological aspects of Sikhism than on theological and metaphysical. His interpretation of the literary symbol and of the emergence of the Sikh heroic character is sensitive and original. So is his manipulation of the English language which yields to him so much of its magic and subtlety.

Two of the latest books to come out are *Paintings of the Sikhs* by W.G. Archer and *Sunset of the Sikh Empire* by Sita Ram Kohli.

Archer's book is the first attempt at exploring the field of Sikh 'aesthetics. He has included in it secular painting which flourished under the patronage of the Sikh court. To his study of Sikh painting, Archer adds a brief historical survey in which he traces the rise of Sikhism as a religion and the emergence of the Sikhs as a ruling power under Ranjit Singh.

Sita Ram Kohli's book, published posthumously, is a work of research based on original sources. The period it studies is the decade intervening between the death of Ranjit Singh and the fall of the Sikh kingdom. The manuscript was edited by Khushwant Singh.

IV

Mention has not so far been made of the Sikh studies in Punjabi. The tradition goes back to the Gurus' time. Bhai Gurdas, who was a contemporary of Guru Arjun and transcribed to his dictation the first copy of the Guru Granth, expounded the Sikh belief and conduct. His work is acknowledged as the key to the Scripture. About the same time began another distinctive vogue in Sikh literature, that is, of the composing of *janamsakhis*, or life stories of Guru Nanak. These *janamsakhis*, models of the earliest Punjabi prose, delineate the Guru in the imagery of faith and have exercised deep influence on the Sikh psyche over the generations.

In Guru Gobind Singh's time, Sikh learning took two clearly marked courses. The five Sikhs the Guru had sent to Benares to study Sanskrit to break the monopoly of the high-born in the field of learning became the founders of the Nirmala school of letters. With Bhai Mani Singh who learnt from Guru Gobind Singh the art of expounding the sacred texts began the school of Gianis. Nirmala scholars, given to celebrate and monastic living, interpreted Sikhism from the point of view of Vedanta and other classical systems of Hindu thought. This school achieved its highest fulfilment in the writings of Pandit Sadhu Singh and Pandit Tara Singh Narotam in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Their books *Gursikhia Prabhakar* and *Gurmāt Nirmal Sagar*, respectively, which are the finest examples of indigenous learning, attempt to present the ontological aspects of Sikhism. From the Nirmalas' unwillingness to

have their works published and to have them sold for money, if at all printed, most of their writings lie unknown in manuscripts, in Devanagari and Gurmukhi, in Gurdwaras and monasteries throughout the Punjab. The Giani tradition led to the preparation, in 1894, of a weighty commentary on the Guru Granth, known as the Faridkot Teeka. The work was commissioned by Maharaja Bikram Singh of Faridkot state who called a representative synod of Sikh schoolmen of the period to finalize the text. With these classics may be mentioned three most important historical works — Bhai Santokh Singh's *Gurpratap Surya*, Ratan Singh Bhangu's *Prachin Panth Prakash*, and Giani Gian Singh's *Panth Prakash*. For its epic scale, for the splurge and splendour of its poetry and its wealth of imagery and detail, *Gurpratap Surya* (1843), dealing with the lives of the Gurus, is the most outstanding landmark in Sikh literature.

The publication of Kahn Singh's *Gurmat Sudhakar* and *Gurmat Prabhakar*, which are dictionaries of Sikh terms, doctrines and principles, and more especially, of his monumental *Mahan Kosh*, the Encyclopaedia of Sikh Literature, marked the beginning of the modern phase of Sikh letters. In him and in Bhai Vir Singh the two traditional streams of Sikh learning — Nirmala and Giani — blended to produce a more integrated and balanced view of Sikh belief. Bhai Vir Singh, famed poet and mystic, edited the celebrated *Gurpratap Surya* and wrote historical treatises. Later in life, he started work on a commentary of the Guru Granth. The portion he was able to complete has been posthumously published by his learned brother, Dr Balbir Singh.

Among significant modern works are Bhai Jodh Singh's *Gurmat Nirnai* which authoritatively elucidates Sikh technological concepts and Sahib Singh's commentaries of the canonical texts. Sahib Singh made a pioneering study of the grammar of the Guru Granth and continued his studies to produce a prestigious ten-volume exegesis which has been recently published.

V

From this rapid survey, it is apparent that scholarly study of Sikhism has been rather limited. There has been some writing by foreigners, but this is by and large peripheral — inspired more by

curiosity about the Sikhs as a people than by a desire to probe the spiritual and philosophical basis of their inspiration. Most of Sikhs' own work falls into the category of what may be described as apologetics. They have peculiar complex about their own religion—a mixture of the defensive and the assertive. This is perhaps the result of the *odium theologicum* to which their faith was subjected at the beginning of the century when leaders of the Singh Sabha renaissance were attempting to redefine the identity of Sikhism as a distinct faith. Their strong concern about self-preservation and their sensitiveness to criticism make the Sikhs impervious to a free discussion of their religious belief. A few years ago a very well meaning book by a Sikh scholar who has since done much to make Sikhism widely known was described by another Sikh writer as "an epitaph on the grave of the Sikhs." And, this because the author had, in his introduction, made a prankish remark about the future of the Sikhs. Besides this one sentence, the whole book was absolutely unexceptionable and did, in fact, counteract, in its enthusiastic presentation of the Sikh tradition, any possible pessimistic suggestion in his initial observation. It may be pointed out that the reviewer was no stubborn bigot nor a cantankerous critic, but a versatile scholar, with wide culture and sympathies, who had lovingly and liberally taught English literature and Sikhism all his life. I have cited this instance only as a symptom of Sikhs' susceptibility and insularity in the discussion and presentation of their religious faith.

The Sikhs' own efforts and those of the others who became interested in the study of their religion have been confined only to introducing their history or translating and explaining their scriptural writing. Interpretative and conceptual studies identifying the meaning of the philosophy, theology and ontology have been far too few. Maybe, with the new cultural ferment that is rising in the Punjab, Sikh studies will receive fresh impetus. As it is, the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation which was set up two years ago was able to produce a substantial corpus of literature. Similarly, the Punjabi University has, through its Department of Guru Granth Sahib Studies, undertaken some projects such as a Dictionary of Sikh Thought and a Concordance of the Guru Granth with a lexi-

con of difficult words and concepts. These works are being executed under most learned auspices. Such basic works must conduce to deeper scholarly studies.

THE SIKH RELIGION: AN EXAMINATION OF SOME OF THE WESTERN STUDIES*

STEPHEN DUNNING

There is the God,
Eternal Truth is His Name:
Maker of all things,
Fearing nothing and at enmity with nothing,
Timeless is His Image:
Not begotten, being of His own Being;
By the grace of the Guru, made known to men.

— *The Mul Mantra*

Although there are close upon eight million Sikhs in India, theirs is virtually an unknown faith in the West. Granted that there are perhaps forty-five times as many Hindus. But there are less than one-fourth as many Jains; yet that Indian sect has received no little attention from Western scholars. This disparity can be ascribed to the fascination that Jain philosophy holds for all who approach it, whereas, the Sikhs themselves are proud to admit, the gospel of Guru Nanak is more one of practical instructions for living a life devoted to God than one of speculations. Another factor of considerable importance is the difficulty involved in studying the Guru Granth, as the Sikhs' sacred book is called. Compiled in the Punjab in 1604, the Guru Granth includes not only the Punjabi and Hindi of its major sections, but also selections in Prakrit, Persian, Marathi, and Gujarati.¹ But perhaps the greatest obstacle to Western understanding is the claim of Sikhism to be a distinct faith which "synthesizes" the best of the Indian and the Semitic traditions.² Whether this claim be true or not, the fact of over four centuries of growth and millions of adherents today makes it extremely significant for the historian of religion in an age of accel-

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erated inter-faith encounter. Yet it also constitutes a challenge to all our preconceptions and general conclusions about the differences between the "East" and the "West".

It seems fair enough to suggest that this last difficulty may account for the presentation of Sikhism in R.C. Zaehner's *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Living Faiths*.³ Whereas five pages are devoted to Jainism as a "religion" distinguishable from Hinduism, there is one short paragraph on Guru Nanak, who is implicitly portrayed as a follower of (and less significant figure than) the Vaisnavite poet Kabir. Yet, Nanak more than Kabir threatens the absolute distinction that Zaehner makes between the anti-idolatrous, prophetic, and revelatory religions of the Semitic tradition and the iconographic, introspective, and mystical religions that had their birth in India.⁴ Zaehner's oversight, however, is not untypical of Western compendia of world faiths.⁵ Indeed, the fairly recent study by Finegan,⁶ although it offers no new insights into Sikhism, is unusual for its inclusion of Sikh faith as a separate religion among the ten that he covers in his three-volume work.

The history of the Sikhs begins in 1469 with the birth of Guru Nanak in the Punjab, which was then torn by strife between Hindus and Muslims. Nanak shocked his contemporaries by wearing elements of the garb of both faiths, by teaching that the differences between them were insignificant, and by holding up for his many followers the ideals of love of the One God and service to all men, whatever their religion or caste. Before his death in 1539 he appointed a successor, the second in a line of ten *gurus* or masters. It was the Fifth Guru (Arjun) who compiled the Guru Granth from his own, his predecessors', and even pre-Sikh Hindu and Muslim poets' writings. In 1708 the Tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, transferred the guruship from himself to the Guru Granth, thereby officially establishing that the sacred book would be the only "living" Guru to orthodox Sikhs. Toynbee correctly observes that "Of all known religious scriptures, this book is the most highly venerated."⁷

Eight years later the first mention of the Sikhs in English occurred.⁸ A British envoy visiting Delhi saw 780 Sikh prisoners being paraded by their Muslim oppressors, with 2000 more Sikh heads adorning the tops of waving poles. The envoy marvelled

that, in spite of such persecution, there was not one apostate; indeed, the devoted prisoners "vied with one another for precedence in death." In 1799 a Devanagari history of the Sikhs was translated into English (via Persian)⁹, and during the next fifteen years two travel books¹⁰ were published with observations about the Sikh people and culture. The first attempt at a real study of the Sikhs was that of John Malcolm (1812),¹¹ but he himself admits that the information available to him was extremely limited and often unreliable. H.H. Wilson's *Civil and Religious Institutions of the Sikhs* (1848)¹² is based largely upon Malcolm. The same is a little less true of Cunningham's monumental *History of the Sikhs* (1849), the first open-minded effort "to give Sikhism its place in the general history of humanity."¹³ For his impartial discussion of the Anglo-Sikh war (1845-46) and the British responsibility for it, Cunningham lost his political appointment in Bhopal, but won forever a place in the hearts of the Sikh people.

During the British "Protection" of the Punjab (1849-1947) there was a great increase of interest in Sikhism. The East India Company, hoping to ameliorate Anglo-Sikh relations, commissioned Ernest Trumpp to translate the Guru Granth in 1869. Trumpp's work¹⁴ hindered by incompleteness, his lack of familiarity with the Punjabi dialect and his all-too-evident disdain for Sikhism, was published in 1877, which may in part account for the omission of any Sikh texts from the *Sacred Books of the East*.¹⁵ To make matters worse, the Punjab was invaded during the last half of the century by missionaries dedicated to "winning" the entire territory "for Christ."¹⁶

The reversal came about the turn of the century, when Max Arthur Macauliffe resigned from the Indian Civil Service (1893) in order to devote all his time to translating the Guru Granth. The result,¹⁷ in six volumes, is conscious response to Trumpp, and suffers in the opposite direction for its uncritical acceptance of all current Sikh traditions and orthodox interpretations of the nature of Sikhism. Its publication in 1909 was followed by a short account of the Sikhs based on Macauliffe by Dorothy Field (1914),¹⁸ a new edition of Cunningham's *History*, and numerous other books and articles, almost all moderately "pro-Sikh," but very often also

quite "pro-British."¹⁹

With John Clark Archer's *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyahs* (1946),²⁰ the Western critical study of Sikhism really begins. Archer's plan for the book is to "explain Sikhism as a venture in the reconciliation of religions."²¹ In contrast, Duncan Greenlees' faithful presentation (1952) of contemporary Sikh theology and his new translation of portions of the Guru Granth lacks such critical ambition.²² The works of C.H. Loehlin (1964, 1966) probe quite a bit deeper, for his constant effort is to show the similarities and differences between Sikhism and his own Christian faith.²³ However, it is W.H. McLeod's recent *Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion* (1968)²⁴ which earns the right to be called the first thorough unbiased, critical and original Western study of the foundations of Sikhism.

A detailed examination of each of these authors in turn would be beyond the scope of this essay and, from the sheer weight of quantity, would tend to confuse more than clarify the hermeneutical problems involved in the Western study of Sikhism. Instead, we shall focus upon four scholars who have not only done the most study and writing about Sikhism but who are spread at almost equal intervals over the past one hundred years: Trumpp, Macauliffe, Archer, and McLeod. In each case we shall examine the author's understanding of the fundamentals of Sikh faith, in order to shed more light upon his judgement on the validity of the Sikh claim to be both a synthesis of two great religions and an independent religion in its own right.

-TRUMPP: SIKHISM AS A HINDU SECT

It is understandable that Trumpp should consider his predecessors' work to have been inadequate, for, as he correctly complains, "All these authors had not read the Granth themselves, but received the information they gave from second hand."²⁵ Yet, upon close examination, it appears that Trumpp had other motives also in this brief introductory "Sketch."²⁶ Cunningham had accepted Sikh faith as "a natural and important result of the Muhammadan conquest,"²⁷ thus implying that it is in some way, like Islam, a "post-Christian" religion, and even stated explicitly that the Sikhs "have everything Christianity can offer."²⁸ In contrast to this praise

for the vitality of Sikhs and their faith.²⁹ Trumpp, a German missionary writing almost thirty years after the British conquest of the Punjab, considered Sikhism to be a "waning religion"³⁰ and the Guru Granth "incoherent and shallow," useful only for philological study.³¹ He complained that the Sikh *gianis* (professional exegetes) were ignorant of the real meaning of their own scriptures, and, on this basis, he turned to more educated Brahmins for help in his translation.³² It is probably true that the *gianis* were not highly educated men at that time, certainly not in English and most likely not even in all the dialects of the Guru Granth. On the other hand, the Brahmins could not have been much better acquainted with all the Punjabi dialects of three centuries before. Furthermore, Macauliffe reports that the *gianis*, offended by Trumpp's irreverent blowing of (forbidden) tobacco smoke on the sacred Guru Granth, used the opportunity to refuse all help they might have given to this foreign invader of their special province.³³

Trumpp's central complaint about Sikh theology is that it contradicts itself. In his analysis of the Sikh concept of God,³⁴ he correctly perceives the emphasis upon the Oneness of God, despite the many names by which men call Him; upon God's attributes of self-existence and uncreatedness, and, more important, such negative appellations as His infinity, eternity, inaccessibility, ineffability, *et cetera*; and upon God as Creator of the universe, a creation which is not *ex nihilo* but rather a "playful" emanation of the Deity into the multifarious manifestations of existence. To Trumpp, this means that matter is co-eternal with Spirit, and that this lack of fundamental distinction between them is the foundation of pantheism. God is the "all-filling world soul," and, insofar as He is claimed to be distinct from His creation, the Guru Granth confronts us with a "finer kind of Pantheism. . . (which) borders frequently on Theism,"³⁵ and contradicts the "grosser Pantheism" of the emanation theory. Trumpp is certain that a God which "emanates" creation cannot be "a self-conscious spirit," and that all genuine belief in a wilful God among the Sikhs is based not upon the Guru Granth but has, perhaps due to the "silent" influence of Islam, been developed by the common folk, who "constructed for themselves a God such as they required for their outward and in-

ward wants.”³⁶

The second contradiction which Trumpp finds concerns the nature of the human soul. Since he understands the Sikh concept of *Maya* as the illusory playfulness of a wanton Creator, he equates the Guru Granth attacks on “egoism” with disapproval of all perception of duality.³⁷ Indeed, he sees no difference whatsoever between the Sikh *nirvan* and the “total dissolution of individual existence by the re-absorption of the Soul in the fountain of light,” which he holds to be the fundamental “pantheism” and “atheistic pessimism” of Buddhist doctrine.³⁸ Both seek an end to transmigration of the soul through repeated births and deaths; they disagree only on the means whereby to achieve that goal. But whereas Buddhism is at least consistent by teaching an atheistic doctrine, Trumpp complains that Sikhism juxtaposes to its pantheistic absolutism numerous ethical demands upon the conscious, individualized human soul. These demands come from a (now) personified deity—a concept which contradicts both the “re-absorption” theory and the karmic “determinism” to be found in the Guru Granth.³⁹

Thus it is with a sceptical and disdainful eye that Trumpp turns to Sikh ethics. Perceiving that the cornerstone of Sikh faith is the Guru, who is “the only infallible guide,”⁴⁰ Trumpp criticizes Guru Nanak for never having offered any proof of himself as the divinely appointed “true Guru.” The Guru is one who teaches both “annihilation” of the self and such incompatible moral duties as “muttering” the name of God, obedience to himself as Guru, “service to the saints,” almsgiving and the practice of ablutions, and charity to animals to the point of vegetarian abstinence.⁴¹ Trumpp understands that the “inward state of mind” takes precedence for Sikhs over asceticism and caste observances,⁴² but contradicts this by saying that such moral expectation as regards temples, wearing attire, the communal meal and tithing represent a return to the oppressive legalism “which they had thrown off.”⁴³

Trumpp is no less confusing on the inner development of Sikh history. Having accused Guru Gobind Singh of a “relapse” into Hinduism, he later acquits him of any theological deviation from the teaching of Guru Nanak.⁴⁴ Guru Gobind Singh, it appears, is to be credited with the political and religious organization

of the Sikhs, for it was he who instituted the *Khalsa* of all believers, replete with baptismal initiation and a sort of communion ritual. Trumpp is somewhat gratified that Guru Gobind Singh "abolished" the guruship which his predecessors (but not Guru Nanak) had seemingly identified with immanent deity itself.⁴⁵ It is a scandal to our German missionary that "prayer to the Supreme is hardly ever mentioned in the Granth, whereas prayer to the Guru is frequently enjoined."⁴⁶

As to the place of Sikhism in the religious history of India, Trumpp allows hardly a page to go by without some derogatory remarks about the lack of originality of Guru Nanak and his successors.⁴⁷ He sees no substantial difference between Kabir and Guru Nanak or the other nine Gurus, although he allows that Guru Gobind Singh "relapsed at many points again into Hinduism."⁴⁸ It remains a question, however, what Trumpp thinks Guru Gobind Singh "relapsed" from, since for him Sikh theology is that of Kabir and the other Vaisnava *bhagats*, (*bhaktas*) with a "silent" dose of Islamic influence on the popular level.⁴⁹ Sikh attacks on idolatry are taken from Kabir and a thoroughly Hinduized Sufism,⁵⁰ the life of the householder was simply held up as "equally acceptable" with the ascetic life,⁵¹ and the rigidities of the caste system were merely relaxed a bit, not "directly assailed" by Guru Nanak.⁵² For Trumpp, Sikh faith remains a sectarian reform of Hinduism.

In defence of Trumpp, it must be admitted that nineteenth-century Sikhism was in a period of decline, and that military concerns such as preponderate when a people is in the throes of losing its hard-earned freedom had pushed the more "spiritual" aspects of Sikh faith into the background. However, there are several fundamental questions which Trumpp's analysis raises, and to which we must refer in the discussion of other Western scholars: (1) In what way, if any, is Sikh theology "pantheistic?" (2) Does Sikhism teach the "re-absorption" of the individual soul into the Absolute? (3) How do Sikhs reconcile the ethical responsibility of (free) man with the will of an omnipotent God on the one hand and the theory of transmigration (and the karmic law upon which it is based) on the other? (4) What is the Sikh understanding of the Guru? (5) What are the substance and general purpose of Sikh moral injunctions?

tions? And (6) to what extent did the nine "successor" Gurus, and especially Guru Gobind Singh, develop or alter the teachings of Guru Nanak?⁵³ Only after we have thus isolated the actual doctrines of Guru Nanak will we be able to assess the validity of Trumpp's analysis of Sikhism as a deviant and self-contradicting "reform" of "the old tough Hinduism."⁵⁴

MACAULIFFE: SIKH ORTHODOXY RESPONDS

From 1877 to 1909 a great many changes occurred in the Punjab. The influx of Christian missionaries made the Sikhs fear for their religious survival as, in the first half of the century, they had feared for (and lost) their political independence.⁵⁵ The British administrators remained, for the most part, aloof from the indigenous population; however, that there was some awareness of the varieties of Sikhism is shown by the distinction in a Census Report (1881) between Hindus who revere the Guru Granth but are not outwardly Sikhs, and the more easily identifiable *Singhs*, i.e. members of the *Khalsa* who wear distinctive clothing and always call themselves (and are usually meant by) the name "Sikh."⁵⁶ Most Western writing about the Sikhs during this period was generally from one of two points of view: that of the Christian missionary, or that of the English traveller or resident in the Punjab who considered the British "Protection" to have been the salvation of Sikhism as a religion.⁵⁷ It was from among these residents that one appeared who, in addition to knowing Punjabi, had tremendous esteem for the Sikhs and their faith, and so won the confidence and help of the now English speaking *gianis* in his effort to refute Trumpp, to make a reliable translation of the Guru Granth available to English and "busy" Sikhs alike, and to record the professional interpretation of the Guru Granth before all the *gianis* had disappeared and the Punjabi vernacular had changed beyond recognition.⁵⁸

With Macauliffe, therefore, we have the assurance that his statements in *The Sikh Religion* have been approved by the orthodox *gianis*,⁵⁹ and thus do not suffer from the bias that so influenced Trumpp. But, for that very reason, they are uncritical judgments, and demonstrate the lack of serious study within the Sikh community at the turn of the century. Lest⁶⁰ we hope for a little

greater perspective from Macauliffe himself, it should be stated at the outset that his purposes were avowedly apologetic, and his "own" opinions, as represented in two lectures delivered to English audiences (1903), are almost *verbatim* identical with those expressed in the "censored" larger work of 1909.⁶¹ They are also for the most part those reflected in Dorothy Field's little book,⁶² to which we shall occasionally refer.

Macauliffe's treatment of the Sikh doctrine of God is a first example of his awareness of, and inability to deal with, the logical problems raised by Trumpp. Stressing the monotheistic nature of Sikhism and its deep opposition to the idolatry and superstition of Guru Nanak's age,⁶³ he concludes that even with a "formless" God no religion can ever totally eliminate either anthropomorphic theism or philosophic pantheism. However, he maintains that in Sikhism they are happily "blended" in the doctrine of the ineffability of God.⁶⁴ Rather than simply settle for a primitive "contradiction" on this matter, Macauliffe does point out that the personality and omnipresence of God express His dual aspects—immanence and "abstract" Being (or transcendence). God is One, and as "One" He both pervades His creation and remains distinct from it.

A similar statement constitutes Macauliffe's explanation of the Sikh doctrine of *nirvan*. It is indeed absorption into the Absolute,⁶⁵ which Field distinguishes (without elaboration) from the "annihilation" theory which Trumpp attacked.⁶⁶ Juxtaposed to this impersonal ideal is the belief in paradise (*Sach Khand*), a place where liberated souls actually "recognize one another and enjoy everlasting beatitude. Several learned Sikhs," Macauliffe continues, "maintain that Nirvan and Sach Khand are practically the same."⁶⁷ Despite his lack of probing into the conflict between these two ideals, Macauliffe does set aright Trumpp's cosmogonic misunderstanding: far from asserting that matter is co-eternal with Spirit, the Guru Granth considers the primal reality to be Spirit, out of which come differentiated individual spirits, which are to the primal Spirit roughly as a glass of water is when immersed in the ocean. "The glass is the subtle body or covering of the soul. If the glass itself be broken or taken away, the water in it . . . blends with the water of the ocean. This is an exemplification of Nirvan."⁶⁸

The breaking of the "glass" is not physical death or a universal Day of Judgement, but the individual's release from karmic transmigration.⁶⁹ Macauliffe, rather than criticize this difficult theory (except on the grounds that it might inhibit civic ambition),⁷⁰ simply defends it as having been quite attractive to many prominent Western writers,⁷¹ and the cause behind the Sikhs' extraordinary bravery in battle.⁷² Field goes a little further, understanding personal monotheism as a "modification" of the karmic law and admitting that the Sikh concept of *maya*, upon which it is based, is not altogether consistent.⁷³ However, she equivocates, the Sikh "service to the thought of their day was above all a practical one. It was the proclamation of a *new way of salvation*. . ."⁷⁴

As for the Guru as mediator of that new way, Macauliffe sets the record straight with regard to the change made by Guru Gobind Singh. In great detail he gives the story of the transfer of the guruship to the *Adi Granth*,⁷⁵ thence called the *Guru Granth*, thereby ending all illusions as to the "abolition" of that office. Field explains that Guru Nanak's emphasis upon the Guru was in terms of God as the true Guru,⁷⁶ and she also includes, which Trumpp had overlooked, the Sikh denial of the existence of any "divine incarnation" or *avatara*.⁷⁷

It is with regard to Sikh ethics that Macauliffe makes his greatest contribution. Guru Nanak counsels inner purity of motive and deed rather than external observances. As usual, Macauliffe lets the Guru speak for himself:

Religion consisteth not in a patched coat, or in a beggar's staff, or in ashes smeared on the body;

Religion consisteth not in ear-rings worn, or a shaven head, or the blowing of horns.

Abide pure amid the impurities of the world; thus shalt thou find the way to religion.

Religion consisteth not in mere words.

He who looketh on all men as equal, deserveth to be called religious.

Religion consisteth not in going abroad and visiting tombs or places of cremation, or sitting in attitudes of contemplation:

Religion consisteth not in roaming in foreign countries, or in bathing at places of pilgrimage.

Abide pure amid the impurities of the world; thus shalt thou find the way to religion.⁷⁸

It is in this context that we must view Guru Nanak's prohibitions on pilgrimages, purity laws, *et cetera*, and the social concern and devotional simplicity with which he wished to replace them. Thus he was very firm in his rejection of caste,⁷⁹ and perhaps even "too strict"⁸⁰ with regard to personal habits of industry, cleanliness and avoidance of intoxicants. However, he was no advocate of vegetarianism, which he considered another formalistic escape from genuine self-knowledge and devotion to God.⁸¹

What he did stress were fulfilment in the householder's life instead of ascetic withdrawal, and loyalty and service to men and God instead of means of concentrating even more upon one's own karmic situation. As the Second Guru (Angad) said, "The best devotion is the remembrance of the True Name; the best act is philanthropy. . ."⁸² That Macauliffe and Field understood *simran* (remembrance of God's name) as "repetition," much like Trumpp's "muttering," must be conceded.⁸³ However, it appears that many Sikhs also understood *simran* as very like the old Hindu practice of *mantra*-recitation.

With regard to the problem of the changes brought about by Guru Gobind Singh, Macauliffe presents these as natural developments due to the demands of changing historical conditions. Whereas Trumpp seemed to write off Guru Nanak's successors as blind imitators or even apostates from the faith, Macauliffe, on the issues of guruship, tobacco, and especially the growth of Sikh militancy, takes great pains to trace the course of Sikh persecutions by the Muslims⁸⁴ and the gradual turning (beginning with Guru Arjun, expanding with Guru Hargobind, and reaching its culmination in Guru Gobind Singh) from unsuccessful efforts at peaceful negotiation to the power of the sword.⁸⁵

It is against the background of conflict with the Muslims and Christian missionaries that we must understand the giani's — and thus Macauliffe's and Field's — understanding of the origins of Sikhism. They present it as "a religion totally unaffected by Semitism or Christian influences. Based on the concept of the unity of God, it rejected Hindu formularies and adopted . . . standards which were totally opposed to the theological beliefs of Gurus Nanak's age and country." Macauliffe concludes that "it would be

difficult to point to a religion of greater originality..."⁸⁶ Although admitting that monotheistic trends can be traced back to the Vedas,⁸⁷ these apologists, speaking in a period of Sikh decline, felt a great fear of the "boa constrictor" of Brahmanic Hinduism.⁸⁸ Perhaps Macauliffe's real understanding of the birth of Sikhism can be inferred from his comparison of the Brahmanical priests with Roman Catholic missionaries in Protestant countries,⁸⁹ his frequent references to the coincidence of the Sikh movement with the Lutheran reform in Europe,⁹⁰ and his distinction between Guru Nanak's Sikhism and the movements of Guru Nanak's predecessors : "Without assistance from on high the spirit of Reform may flap her wings within her iron cage in vain..."⁹¹

What was Macauliffe's contribution to Western understanding of Sikhism? First, without engaging in the difficult theological subtleties to which criticism is inevitably led, he gave us a sympathetic presentation of the many aspects of Sikh belief in God and *nirvan* and impressed upon us the faith which these teachings have inspired over the centuries. He brought to the foreground the Sikh emphasis upon Spirit, whether in cosmogony or in the moral life to be lived in this world. He clarified the concept of 'Guru' and the anti-formalistic thrust of Sikh ethics. Having traced the change and continuity in the succession of Gurus, he drew attention to the fact that Sikhism's original founder, Guru Nanak, was not himself a mere successor but the recipient of what is called in the West a "divine revelation." Whatever the "influences" on Guru Nanak may have been, on his central article of faith stands Sikhism as a full-fledged "religion."

To conclude our discussion of Macauliffe, it might be fitting to quote a paragraph which he liked well enough to use it twice,⁹² and which Dorothy Field⁹³ borrowed for her own summary :

To sum up some of the moral and political merits of the Sikh religion : It prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concremation of widows, the use of wine and other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimages to the sacred rivers and tanks of the Hindus; and it inculcated loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty, and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest citizens of any country.

ARCHER: SIKHISM AS "RECONCILIATION"

The publication of Macauliffe's *The Sikh Religion* gave added impetus to the Sikh revival which, thanks to relatively peaceful times and the better side of British education, started soon after the turn of the century. Of the numerous books written by Sikhs during this period, it has been remarked recently that "this writing on the whole was more adulatory and expository than scholastic. More discriminating studies came in the next phase which started in the thirties with some university men taking to Sikh letters."⁹⁴ Most prominent among them were Jodh Singh and Teja Singh in theology and Ganda Singh in history, all associated with the Khalsa College at Amritsar. This academic awakening was matched by a devotional resurgence on the popular level, and so the Sikhism which John Clark Archer found when he came to Amritsar in 1937 was a far cry from that which caused the lament of Macauliffe only thirty years before.

It is a feel for the practice of Sikh faith and the community tradition upon which that faith is based which one gets from Archer's "Study in Comparative Religion." His first two chapters, despite exaggeration of Sikh denominationalism, introduce the Western reader to the "pilgrim" people worshipping at Amritsar and other sacred shrines in their "homeland"—the Punjab. The next nine chapters chronicle the development of a Sikh "communal consciousness," from the pre-Nanak Hindu-Muslim interactions to the arrival of Christianity, Western Modernism, and the challenge of the Ahmadiyyat (Muslim) reform and missionary movement.

It is not until his last chapter that Archer finally turns to the theological questions raised by Trumpp, and then all he presents is a brief paraphrase⁹⁵ of Jodh Singh's exposition of Sikh theology. There we learn that God is one, immanent and knowable yet transcendent and without any of the human limitations; that the true ideal is the end of "egoism" and "individuality," which are the momentum of karmic transmigration ; that God is the true Guru or guide with whom men may indeed "commune," and that the desire for the "cessation" of *karma* is balanced by the opposite principle of "action," the arena of ethics which Archer finds to be somewhat

“casual” in Sikhism and in need of “thorough exposition.”⁹⁶

Indeed, the two greatest failings of Archer’s study are his conviction that Sikhism has no real theology and his constant derogation of Sikh ethics. Thus Guru Nanak was not so much a philosopher, he says, as “the simple earnest servant of *Sat Nam* (Name of God) by verbal declaration and by inner consecration.”⁹⁷ Yet Archer’s point is voided by his omission of any discussion what *Sat Nam* meant to Guru Nanak, e.g., of the practice of *simran*, and also by his other remarks about Guru Nanak’s (theological) criticisms of Jainism and Islam.⁹⁸ His analysis of Guru as a term which sometimes applies to God and sometimes to me, but, in any case, always refers to someone “most highly respected,”⁹⁹ is perhaps an indication of Archer’s own difficulties with theological matters.

Another example is his treatment of Sikh ethics. There Archer declares that Guru Nanak’s “own gift was almost altogether theological (!), with some incidental rules of conduct.”¹⁰⁰ Although contrasting Guru Nanak with his forerunners by “something positive and realistic in his life”¹⁰¹ which they presumably lacked, and admitting that all ten Gurus have been moral exemplars to the Sikhs, it is clear that he dismisses Sikh ethics on the dubious assumption that they have been ignored by the majority of Sikhs,¹⁰² especially by such pivotal figures in the development of the community as Ranjit Singh.¹⁰³

It is the “community consciousness” of Sikhism that Archer considers of fundamental importance. His entire study is dedicated to seeking out the principles operative when religious communities interact.¹⁰⁴ He can distinguish Guru Nanak from his forerunners, and thus “judge” him, only as a “genius of a movement” who must be evaluated, like Christ and Buddha, “by other Sikhs and by what came after him.” It is politics that “in the long run” are “an inescapable and valid test of faith.”¹⁰⁵

Within this context Archer gives a very interesting, detailed, and, for the most part, correct description of the growth of the Sikh community as a response to external threat, originally forming under Guru Arjun,¹⁰⁶ developing under Guru Hargobind and culminating in the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh,¹⁰⁷ whom Archer considers “unquestionably the ablest man the Sikhs had yet produced.”¹⁰⁸

He carries his analysis through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries right up to the modern struggle of the Sikhs to define their relationship with Hinduism, for even today there are many semi-Hindu "Sikhs" and many "separatist" Singhs.¹⁰⁹

Space does not permit inclusion of the wealth of information about Sikh history available for the first time to Western readers in Archer's book. Our concern is to evaluate how well this first attempt in critical and unbiased scholarship measured up to its own stated objective: the analysis of Sikhism "as a venture in the recociliation of religions."¹¹⁰ Archer complains that, for all the recent Sikh studies which present their faith as a reform of Hinduism, a self-defence movement against Islam or as a peace-loving people forced over the centuries to take up arms, there has been no mention "of any original or continuing motive of religious reconciliation ! and the Sikhs are themselves," he laments, "generally quite unwilling to loose (*sic* !) themselves in such a consummation."¹¹¹

Although Archer nowhere explains what he really means by such a "consummation," it is safe to infer that he is thinking of the early Sikh anti-particularist emphasis. He understands the time of Guru Arjun as one "of utter transformation of the mission of the Sikhs," that is, of change from a movement of "reconciliation of religions" to an independent and self-conscious "church."¹¹² Since "religion for Archer is the meeting ground of "morality" (which is "God's affair") and "politics" (which are "human affairs"), he judges that the Sikhs have failed "to understand fully their mission as a people in the world,"¹¹³ for their ethical teaching has been superficial and their political autonomy transitory. It would appear that Sikhism for Archer is indeed a religious effort, but one that has not yet demonstrated that it can claim viability as an independent faith.

One cannot help but wonder if there is not, underlying Archer's analysis, a certain scepticism concerning the very validity of Guru Nanak's original "guruship." His failure to appreciate the scope and depth of the ethical teachings in the Guru Granth indicates, when considered in light of his conviction that morality and ethics are the affairs of God, that Archer does not believe Sikh faith to have been divinely inspired at any particular point in its

history. This is especially clear in his treatment of Guru Nanak's revelation-experience as mere "legend," yet it is what prompted the first declaration that "There is no Hindu, nor is there any Musalman."¹¹⁴ Such a judgement, so totally contrary to that of Macauliffe and Sikh orthodoxy, shows Archer's blindness with regard to the real genius of Sikhism. Whether due to an unstated conviction that non-Christian religions are not really capable of "reconciliation," to his manifest struggle (and failure) to arrive at a clear concept of "religion," or his apparent ignorance of the real nature of the Guru Granth, Archer has not successfully probed that tension so basic to Sikhism and with which he opened his book : "Although Sikhism may have developed separately out of its very failure to accomplish its initial purpose, the failure may be called to some extent successful."¹¹⁵ But it is this tension, the struggle of the *Sikhs* (lit., "disciples") of God and Guru Nanak to give form to their faith in "Sikhism" which must ultimately decide the question of whether or not Sikhism can, after all, be regarded as a distinct member in the assembly of world religions.

* * * *

Our discussion of Archer has afforded a brief glimpse of the theology of Jodh Singh, one of the leading Sikh spokesmen of this century. Before going on to the very recent work of McLeod, it might be well to summarize briefly the efforts of Sher Singh (a *giani*) to explain Sikhism to Western audiences, for such is the main purpose of the dissertation which he wrote at Oxford University and published in 1944. Avoiding, as we also must, the thorny biographical problems surrounding the Guru and his travels, and in particular two fundamental oversights of Western scholars: (1) that Guru Nanak's statements about God were based upon the conviction that one becomes like the God one worships,¹¹⁶ and (2) that Indian "pantheism," unlike its counterpart in the West, is belief not in the immanence of God in Nature but of Nature in God. For the Sikh, God is "given" and empirical existence is contingent upon Him.¹¹⁷ His pre-creation Being is alone and entirely spiritual, an unknowing, transcendental consciousness out of which the differentiated universe evolves.¹¹⁸ In his non-incarnate manifestations, he is known by many names in many religions, but fully expressed

by none, not even the *Sikh Wahiguru*.¹¹⁹ This is the personal, anthropomorphic aspect of God who, as transcendent, is Creator, and, as immanent, is the true Guru and basis for the solidarity symbolized in the Khalsa.¹²⁰ In His impersonal aspect, God is formless and beyond all particularistic appellations (*Sat Nam*). He is the Absolute without any attributes (*nirguna*) Who "evolves" Himself into the forms of Creation in a spirit of "sport" (not frivolity), of pure "enjoyment."¹²¹ Thus *maya* is not illusion but the changes of God's Self-evolutions, the "interesting"¹²² aspect of the world which makes it possible for Sher Singh to find the transcendent and immanent aspects of God united in the concept of God's (and man's) "aesthetic"¹²³ enjoyment of life.

Since the world of *maya* is not illusory, all that stand between man and *Sat Nam* is man's egoism, and the moral struggle for which the real existence of the world is necessary.¹²⁴ Although Guru Nanak rejected the ideas of Heaven and Hell, which contradict the theory of transmigration, his stress was not so much upon "merging" with God as living eternally in the presence of God, on love rather than release. This is accomplished only by the end of *haumai* (egoism), which is what binds man to the "law" of karma. The Guru, as the guide in this adventure, is neither an *avatara* nor a mere man, but a perfect one who devotes his life to leading others towards God, the Ultimate Guru. In shifting this role to the Guru Granth, Guru Gobind Singh also established the Khalsa and thus completed the socialization of Sikhism.¹²⁶

On this foundation Sikh ethics can be viewed as a consistent system. Taking elements of the *karma* (action), *bhakti* (devotion) and *jnana* (knowledge) *marga* traditions from India,¹²⁷ Guru Nanak fused them in what might be called the *wismad marga*, the path of wonder and awesome enjoyment over the aesthetic beauty of God and the creation which exists in Him.¹²⁸ But Sher Singh prefers to use the term *nam marga*, that wonder (*wismad* is not "repetition") at the name of God which is love itself, and upon which all anti-egoistic ethical injunctions are based. This experience is "normal" and not "irrational"¹²⁹ and cannot be achieved by either the world-fleeing or world-worshipping extremes of the ascetic or the materialist.

Sher Singh admits and deplors the development of militarism and sectarianism within the Sikh faith.¹³⁰ His primary historical concern, however, is not with post-Nanak matters but rather to show that "The background of Sikhism is not Hindu alone but Aryan and Semitic both. At the same time from the very beginning it asserts itself as an independent religion, in which a new spirit breathes and on which the mighty personality of the Guru has left an indelible impress."¹³¹

MCLEOD: THE CASE AGAINST MUSLIM INFLUENCE

Although it might at first glance appear that McLeod is simply re-stating the position of Trumpp, such is not the case. His recent (1968) book on Guru Nanak shows a deep appreciation of the Guru's originality, of the depth and scope of his theology and of the genuine ambiguities which one confronts in any assessment of the historicity of the narratives about his life. If we may accept Sher Singh's analysis as fundamentally representative of the Sikhs' new, more sophisticated, self-understanding, then —on his theological grasp alone—McLeod fares far better than any of his Western predecessors. He perceives that Guru Nanak's emphasis is more upon a personal, monotheistic concept of God than on an impersonal monist Absolute; that this God is immanent in creation and the human heart, rather than removed in a Semitic "dualistic" sense; that man can know and love God in His *saguna* aspect (with attributes) and by his many names, even though God Himself remains also and always *nirguna*; that the Creator-Sustainer – Destroyer and Sovereign of the world is eternal, formless, and ineffable.¹³²

In his discussion of "unregenerate" man in the thought of Guru Nanak, McLeod has made an original and substantial contribution to Sikh studies.¹³³ He demonstrates conclusively that Guru Nanak used the Punjabi word *man* in a broad sense that includes the English "mind", "heart", and "soul." Similarly, *haumai*, he argues, is sometimes the equivalent of "ego," sometimes close to "pride", but at other times best rendered by "self", "self-centred," or even "sin" (if "sin" is understood in an individual and not in a universal sense). The human dilemma is that the *man* is filled with *haumai*, rather than love of God and a spirit of service. By treating *maya* in his section on unregenerate man, McLeod makes it seem

more negative than does Sher Singh. But he carefully distinguishes it from the Vedantic concept of "illusion" by calling it "delusion," a relationship created by *haumai* in the desire of the *man* to remain separate from God.

McLeod finds Guru Nanak's greatest "positive originality" in his understanding of "The Divine Self-Expression."¹³⁴ Here again his analysis of the Guru's use of certain key terms takes Western scholarship a large step forward. *Sabad*, the "Word," is no longer the "mystical sound" of the yoga tradition, but a term for that comprehensible (as opposed of *kabir*) path which leads to God. It is a "vehicle" of God's Self-revelation. Insofar as it can be distinguished from *Nam*, the "Name" of God, it describes a medium of communication mediated by the Guru, whereas *Nam* refers more often to the object of communication which is directly received by the believer. The only elaboration of *Nam* which can be said to apply fully to God is *Sat Nam*, "His Name is Truth." The Guru himself, McLeod finds, cannot be strictly identified with God. He too is a "voice" or "vehicle" of God, and thus identical with *Sabad*, the "Word". More surprising, the *hukam* shares in this identity. *Hukam* is not simply the "Will" of God, and not at all in the Islamic sense of capricious Will. It is that principle ordained by God which dependably makes the universe operate according to fixed physical and karmic laws. It is, in fact, another "revelation of the nature of God," and thus freedom exists not in release from but in submission to, *hukam*. These four terms are summed up in *sach*, "Truth," in which they all are fundamentally identical with each other. They describe the "what" and the "how" of salvation; it is *nadar*, "Grace," that explains the "why." McLeod perceived that Guru Nanak's use of *nadar* is not the Pauline concept of "universal" salvation, but rather an individual "election" or "choice." His quotation from Nanak's *Japuji* (the "Sermon on the Mount" of Sikhism) shows the relation of *nadar* to *karma*:

Karma determines the nature of our birth, but it is through grace that the door of salvation is found.

Japuji, 4

Since so much attention has already been given to the Sikh "Path," we need not review in detail McLeod's treatment¹³⁵ of Guru

Nanak's insistence upon "interior religion," upon living in the world without being attached to it, upon loving surrender to God and daily prayerful and musical devotions to Him. He is the first Western scholar to appreciate the importance of *simran*, "repetition," "remembrance," and loving meditation upon the nature of God. In this analysis, he is in agreement with Sher Singh. He also agrees that *wismad*, "wonder" or "awe," is the result of *simran*, but his treatment of *wismad* is, like that of *maya*, a little too brief and too focussed on the (negative) purgation of evil passions which accompanies it. His explanation of Guru Nanak's five "stages" of spiritual growth is very clear and complete, and his suggestion that "fulfilment" may best express the fourth stage (*Karam Khand*) may prove fruitful for future Sikh exegesis. His stress upon the ineffability of most of these concepts, the need for personal experience of Reality as preached by Guru Nanak, and the correspondence between the doctrines of Guru Nanak, and what we know about his life, offer new insights not available in the works of earlier Western scholars.

There is, however, one fundamental point in McLeod's understanding which is likely to bother many of his Sikh readers: his theory that Muslim influence on Guru Nanak was minimal and indirect.¹³⁶ He bases upon the claims that the *Sant* (*sadhu*) tradition of northern India had already absorbed all of the "Sufi" elements which can be found in Guru Nanak's thought; that Sufism and Islam in general were, in the Punjab, of a very much acculturated nature; and that Guru Nanak's direct contacts with orthodox Sunni Muslims were few and his reaction to their formalism entirely negative.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the long list of concepts shared by Guru Nanak and the Sufis can in almost every case "with equal cogency be traced back to native Indian sources."¹³⁸ Add this to the conspicuous absence of numerous important Sufi terms in Guru Nanak's work, doctrines such as *karma* and transmigration which contradict Sufi teaching, and Guru Nanak's outspoken criticism of Sufi leaders, and the evidence seems sufficient to "restrain" us from any hasty acceptance of significant Sufi influence.¹³⁹

In more detail, McLeod traces Indian antecedents for Sikh monotheism, the difference between the Arabic *hukam* and the

meaning which Guru Nanak gives it, and the lack of significant correspondence in many other often cited examples of Islamic influence.¹⁴⁰ The examples which he will admit, such as egalitarianism, the image of the bride yearning for her Beloved, and the "veil" which obscures the Truth, seems to him "merely possible" indications of direct Sufi influence.¹⁴¹ Admitting that his conclusions are at best tentative, McLeod points to the eclectic Sant tradition as the source of what Sikhs and most Western commentators have described as the "Islamic elements" in the writings of Guru Nanak.

The significance of McLeod's minimization of Muslim influence upon Guru Nanak pertains not so much to each specific concept or image which he discusses (although it is to be hoped that both Western and Sikh scholars will closely scrutinize his claims) as to the general implication that Sikhism is really only a sectarian reform movement within Hinduism. We have already seen that Trumpp is strongly of this opinion, that Macauliffe and traditional Sikh orthodoxy assert the total "independence" of Sikhism from both Hinduism and Islam, and that Archer finds in Sikh faith an unfulfilled potential for full status as a "religion" of reconciliation. This concept of "reconciliation" is based upon the claim of many modern Sikh scholars, faced with contemporary scepticism about the adequacy of a "revelatory" origin of an entire "religion," that Sikhism is in fact a "synthesis" of Hindu and Islamic elements.¹⁴² Although very conservative Sikhs might not be troubled by McLeod's denial of much influence from the Muslim side, it will certainly not be pleasing to those contemporary liberal scholars who are and shall continue to be so instrumental in the revival of Sikhism.

Is McLeod's "understanding" of this question satisfactory? Has he fully appreciated the importance of the issue which he raises? It would seem that, on the contrary, this is the point where his methodology has most seriously failed him. His 'objective' historical and linguistic analysis has taken Western Sikh studies far beyond all previous efforts. But his failure to involve himself in the crucial element of Sikh faith today and its relationship to his own Christian faith has apparently blinded him to the fundamental importance of the Muslim element for Sikh belief.

Sikhism was born in the Punjab, a land which has been torn by strife between Hindus and Muslims since at least the twelfth century. Its founder taught a gospel intended to end that strife, and even donned elements of the special "religious" garb of both faiths. Each of the ten Gurus had in some way to wrestle with this problem, and the urgency of the question has persisted right down to the present day, when so many Sikhs have been forced to choose between the threat of oppression in Muslim Pakistan on one side and the threat of that old "boa constrictor" – Hinduism – on the other. It is a sign of their strength that, almost as a unanimous community, they have regrouped in the Indian section of the Punjab, with much less land but a far stronger and more unified faith. That faith is not in themselves as a Hindu sect, but in the Guru Granth and their revered historical tradition as a promise of a possible end to those very antagonisms which led to Partition. It is instructive that McLeod, who presumably believes that Christ reconciled "Jew and Greek," does not draw upon his own faith for insight into Sikhism; that he totally overlooks the most Semitic element of all in Sikh faith, and that one aspect which has no parallel in the Sant tradition or the rest of India; a reference for its own history in which it sees the Will of God at work, for the light which God gave to Guru Nanak has been passed on to each Guru and the Guru Granth itself "as one candle lights another;" ¹⁴³ and that the only Western student of Sikhism to date who has perceived the importance of this faith and the belief in history is C.H. Loehlin, whose scholarly contribution to Sikh studies is much less than McLeod's but whose appreciation of the living genius of Sikh faith may be much greater, for Loehlin "understands" Sikhism only in relation to his own Christian faith.

Of the four scholars whom we have examined, three have been found to present a fairly clear, if not always fair or complete, picture of Sikhism. To Trumpp, for all his disdain, goes the honour of having first demonstrated those problems which confront the Western newcomer to Sikh studies. Macauliffe, who is said to have been reciting the *Japuji* when death came to him, instilled in Western students a deep respect for the Guru Granth and the Sikh people. Only McLeod can be credited with having made a pro-

found, critical contribution to our understanding of Sikhism, but he has done it at the cost of that personal involvement which makes Sikhism a "religion" and a way of life for all believing Sikhs.

It is Archer, however, for all his superficiality and confusion who has begun to grasp the crucial problem in defining "Sikhism" or any other of those faiths which look to one great man as their founder. As Guru Nanak is said to have reconciled Hindu and Muslim, just so Buddha taught a "Middle Path," Muhammad united Judaism, Christianity, and Arabic animism, Christ brought Jew and Greek together, and Moses has been interpreted as he who liberated the ancient Israelites from the warring deities of polytheism. In every case, the gospel preached has been one of allegiance directly to God, rather than concern with "religious" differences. In every case, this gospel has been the result of an illumination or revelation which has, as Barth demonstrated in his analysis of the "logic" of revelation,¹⁴⁴ temporarily put an "end" to "religion." And, no less, in every case the immediate disciples of the great prophet, the man in whom they saw a bit of God revealed, have become the founding fathers of a new "religion," a new "-ism."

It is this revelatory origin of Sikh faith, and not its alleged "synthesis" of Hinduism and Islam, which must constitute the basis of its definition as a distinct religion. But such a revelation, with its new, fresh denial of the old, antipathetic legalisms, can be understood only against its background of the conflict between faiths. Sikhism is a religion, and its uniqueness in the history of religions is that in it West and East meet and have been meeting for almost five hundred years, no matter which predominates is scripture or doctrine. And yet, for all its venerable history, Sikhism's origins are closer to us, and far more completely available for study, than those of any of the other demonstrably great historical "reconciliations." In a time when secularism is threatening to "reconcile" all religious traditions into oblivion, it will edify the faith of all if Western scholars turn their attention to the birth and growth of Sikhism, wherein we can and must see so clearly what happens when revelation breaks in upon, and participates in, the trappings and the glories of human history.

NOTES

1. Max Arthur Macauliffe, "The Sikh Religion," in *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, Calcutta, Susil Gupta, 1958, p.2. Hereafter: *Symposium*.
2. E.G., Sher Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, Lahore, Sikh University Press, 1944, esp. pp. 62-120, The popularity of this view is reflected by its total acceptance by C.H. Loehlin, *The Sikhs and Their Scriptures*, Lucknow, Lucknow Publishing House, 1964, p.61, cf., pp. 10, 63.
3. Ed. R.C. Zaehner, Boston, Beacon Press, 1959. The articles on Hinduism and Jainism are by A.L. Basham. Note also the omission of any reference to the Sikhs in another recent work which argues the radical difference between "East" and "West." Arend van Leeuwen's *Christianity in World History*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964.
4. Zaehner, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-19. See note 49 *infra*.
5. To cite just a few, Hans-Joachim Schoeps in *The Religions of Man*, tr., Richard and Clara Winston, (Garden City) Doubleday Anchor, 1968, pp. 158, 167, considers Sikhism as an insignificant sect of Hinduism, founded by Guru Nanak who "combined Hindu-Moslem religion around the god Rama." The Sikhs are totally omitted from Huston Smith's *The Religions of Man*, Charles Braden's *The World's Religions*, and many other introductions to the field.
6. Jack Finegan, *The Archeology of World Religions*, 3 vols, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1952.
7. Arnold Toynbee, "Foreword" to *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, revised by George S. Fraser, New York, Macmillan, 1960, p.9.
8. Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 14
9. See Harbans Singh, "Sikh Studies", a paper presented at The Seminar on the Study of Religion in Indian Universities, Bangalore, September 1967, p. 6.
10. George Forster's *A Journey from Bengal to England*, 1798, and William Franklin's *Memoirs of George Thomas*, 1803. For other similar "travel books," see Harbans Singh, *op. cit.*, p.7.
11. Included in *Symposium*, pp. 84-145.
12. Also in *Symposium*, pp. 54-70.
13. Joseph Davey Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs from the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej*, ed., H.L.O. Garrett (1915), Delhi., S.Chand & Co., 1966 p.xx.
14. *The Adi Granth*, tr. with an introduction by Ernest Trumpp, London, Wm. H. Allen, 1877.
15. General ed., Max Muller, who was, says Macauliffe (*Symposium*, pp. xi-xv) as saddened as the Sikhs that Trumpp's was the only translation available.
16. To cite just one example, see George Smith, *The Conversion of India*, New York, Fleming H. Revell, 1893, p. 151, *et passim*.

17. *The Sikh Religion*, 6 vols, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1909, reprinted by S. Chand (Delhi: 1963). Hereafter: *S.R.*
18. *The Religion of the Sikhs*, London, John Murray, 1914.
19. Garrett represents the common "British" point of view when he contradicts Cunningham (*op.cit.*, p.x) in blaming intra-Sikh conflict for the Sikhs' crossing of the Sutlej. See also the constant references to English "superiority" in C.H. Payne, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Thomas Nelson (London : n.d. ; ca. 1920). Other Westerners of this period who discuss briefly the Sikh faith are M. Bloomfield (in *Studies in the History of Religions*, eds., D. Lyon and G.F. Moore, 1912); A.S. Gordon (in Hastings, ed., *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1920); J.N. Farquhar, (*Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, 1920, and *Modern Religions Movements in India* 1929); Allan Widgery (*Living Religious and Modern Thought*, 1936); and Jean Pellenc (*L' Indes Entrouvre*, tr. as *India Through French Eyes*, 1936). Sher Singh makes frequent references to Barth, Carpenter and Macnicol, but without giving any titles.
20. Archer's subtitle : *A Study in Comparative Religion*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1946.
21. *Ibid.*p5.
22. *The Gospel of the Guru-Granth Sahib*, No. 8, in The World Gospel Series, Madras, Theosophical Publishing House, 1960.
23. See note 2 *supra*, and *The Christian Approach to the Sikh*, London, Edinburgh House Press, 1966
24. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968
25. Trumpp., *op. cit.*, p. xcvi
26. *Ibid.*, p. xcvi-cxvii
27. Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. xx
28. *Ibid.*, p. 11
29. *Ibid.*, p. 12
30. Trumpp., *op. cit.*, p. viii
31. *Ibid.*, p. viii; cf., p. cxix
32. *Ibid.*, p. vi
33. *Symposium*, p.1
34. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, pp. xcvi-cxvii
35. *Ibid.*, p.c
36. *Ibid.*, p. cxii
37. *Ibid.*, pp. xcix, ciii
38. *Ibid.*, pp. cv-cvi
39. *Ibid.*, pp. ciii, cv. cxviii,
40. *Ibid.*, p. cxviii
41. *Ibid.*, pp. cix-cx
42. *Ibid.*, p. cxi
43. *Ibid.*, pp, civ-cvi,
44. *Ibid.*, p. cxix

45. *Ibid.*, p. cxi
46. *Ibid.*, p. cx
47. *Ibid.*, p. cxvii
48. *Ibid.*, p. xcvi
49. *Ibid.*, p. xcvi, Sher Singh (op. cit., pp. 93-98) analyzes the similarities and differences between Kabir and Nanak. The most important are Kabir's Vaisnavite belief in Vedic authority, *avatars*, vegetarianism, *ahimsa*, asceticism as (one) valid path, and the identification of all life with suffering. All these Guru Nanak rejected.
50. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, pp. ci-cii
51. *Ibid.*, p., cxi; cf., p. cvii
52. *Ibid.*, p. cxi
53. Unfortunately, space does not allow us any discussion of the various sects which have split off from Sikhism over the centuries. Trumpp's analysis (p. cviff.) leaves much to be desired. Lochlin, *The Sikhs*, pp. 67-71, is much better, but brief.
54. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. cxviii
55. See the census figures in Smith's *Conversion of India*, ch. ix (note 16 *supra*)
56. Reprinted in Payne, Appendix D (note 19 *supra*)
57. See note 19 and the titles in Harbans Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 7
58. *S.R.*, I, p. xiv ff
59. *Ibid.*, p. xiv ff
60. Macauliffe doubts that as many as twenty-five *gians* could read the Granth in the original languages in 1903. See *Symposium*, p. 25.
61. *Cp.*, e.g., *S.R.*, I, p. xxiii to *Symposium*, p. 25. On the decline of Sikhism, ca. 1900. *Symposium*, p. 25f.
62. Field, *op. cit.* (note 18 *supra*)
63. *S.R.* I, p. xix; cf., *Symposium*, p. 4f
64. *S.R.*, I, pp. lxii ff
65. *Ibid.*, p. lxiv
66. *Op. cit.*, p. 49
67. *S. R.*, I, p. lxiv
68. *Ibid.*, p. lxviii
69. *Ibid.*, p. lxix
70. *Symposium*, p. 25
71. *S.R.*, I, p. lxvi ff
72. *Symposium*, p. 25
73. *Op., cit.*, p. 48f
74. *Ibid.*, p. 51
75. *Symposium*, p. 52
76. *Op. cit.*, p. 52f
77. *Ibid.*, p. 45f
78. In *Symposium*, p. 12

79. Quoted in *Symposium*, p. 13
80. *Ibid.*, p. 25f
81. *Ibid.*, p. 15
82. *Ibid.*, p. 19
83. Thus Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, who refers to *S.R.*, II, p. 9 See also Field, *op. cit.*, p. 55
84. *S.R.*, I, pp. xli-xlix
85. *Symposium*, pp. 27-53
86. *S.R.*, I, pp. liv-lv
87. *S.R.*, I, p. lvii f. Cf., *Symposium*, p. 6f., and Field, *op. cit.*, p. 36ff
88. *S.R.*, I, p. lvii
89. *Ibid.*, p. lvii
90. *Ibid.*, p. xli ff. Cf., *Symposium*, pp. 4, 27
91. *Symposium*, p. 10
92. *S.R.*, I, p. xxiii, and, with minor changes, in *Symposium*, p. 25
93. *Op. cit.*, p. 61
94. Harbans Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 11
95. Archar, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-15
96. *Ibid.*, p. 315
97. *Ibid.*, p. 81
98. *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 103
99. *Ibid.*, p. 134, n. 1
100. *Ibid.*, p. 310
101. *Ibid.*, p. 60f
102. *Ibid.*, p. 282
103. *Ibid.*, p. 242ff
104. *Ibid.*, p. vi
105. *Ibid.*, pp. 105-107
106. *Ibid.*, p. 169
107. *Ibid.*, p. 189
108. *Ibid.*, p. 209
109. *Ibid.*, p. 302; cf., p. 2
110. *Ibid.*, p. 5
111. *Ibid.*, p. 310
112. *Ibid.*, p. 144
113. *Ibid.*, p. 237f
114. *Ibid.*, p. 74f
115. *Ibid.*, p. v
116. Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 124f, 156
117. *Ibid.*, p. 147
118. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-187
119. *Ibid.*, p. 125ff
120. *Ibid.*, p. 178f
121. *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 237

122. *Ibid.*, p. 188f
123. *Ibid.*, pp. 149f., 173
124. *Ibid.*, p. 190
125. *Ibid.*, pp. 201-09
126. *Ibid.*, pp. 30f., 41f.
127. *Ibid.*, pp. 213-31
128. *Ibid.*, pp. 213-37f
129. *Ibid.*, pp. 248. 230f.
130. *Ibid.*, pp. 34ff., 127
131. *Ibid.*, p. 72
132. For this paper I have access only to the MSS. of McLeod, *op. cit.*, Ch. 5:
"The Teaching of Guru Nanak," pp. 148-226. Since the pages of the MSS.
do not correspond to those of the book, I shall refer to sections only. The
discussion of the nature of God is in Section I.
133. *Ibid.*, Section II.
134. *Ibid.*, Section III
135. *Ibid.*, Section IV
136. McLeod deals with this briefly in his book, and, in more detail, in a paper
presented at the Seminar on Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhism and Indian Soci-
ety, September 1966, at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla.
This paper, "The Influence of Islam upon the Thought of Guru Nanak," is
to be published shortly in the *Proceedings of the Indian Institute of
Advanced Study*.
137. *Ibid.*, p. 8
138. *Ibid.* p. 9
139. *Ibid.*, p. 10
140. *Ibid.* p. 10f
141. *Ibid.*, p. 12
142. See note 2 *supra*
143. Sher Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 44, who gives references to Nanak and Gobind
144. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 2, No. 17

GURU NANAK'S TEACHING IN RELATION TO SUFISM*

GURBACHAN SINGH TALIB

SUFISM — THE BACKGROUND

In order to determine what, if any, influences or echoes of Sufistic thought may be discerned in the teaching of Guru Nanak, it will be helpful to go, briefly though, into the origins of Sufism within Islam and the cardinal doctrines and concepts upon which it is built. Sufism, while borrowing a number of its basic ideas from the pre-existing philosophical thought no less than from the teaching of Islam, gave forth to its parent faith, Islam, a certain climate of thought and feeling. It influenced other faiths with which it came into contact, and in its turn received certain ideas and emphases from these faiths. While a study, even in summary form, involving all these developments would require a vast and voluminous effort embracing more than a thousand years over a number of lands and nationalities, it should still be possible to refer very briefly those aspects of Sufism which touched some Indian religions, including Sikhism. Sufism, while firmly embedded in Islam and its Sacred Law (*Shariat*), did represent one aspect of that tendency of the human spirit which time and again breaks free of the restrictions and encumbrances of formal and constricting creeds and endeavours to experience directly the Infinite and the Ineffable. In a highly codified creed, demanding strict conformity like Islam, the scope for the human spirit to pursue the path of experience could not be allowed to be wide; but still thousands of men of

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1. Renderings of quotations into English are by the present writer.

2. Transliteration of names is as these are generally pronounced in India.

enlightened souls did try to enter on such a pursuit— some even braving to be branded as heretics. But by and large, the Muslim Sufi traversed the hard path of reconciling the extreme demands for conformity to the Code with the free flight of the spirit. All through the centuries, a kind of arrangement has existed within all Muslim societies by which a certain degree of autonomy of spiritual experience has been conceded to Sufis of all denominations, who have exerted a vast influence over the masses of men, and have carried on their own kind of emotional practice of Islam in complementary relationship to that enjoyed by *Shariat*. This situation still obtains in all Muslim societies, and in the course of centuries a metaphysics and a splendid body of literature has developed under the impact and impulse of Sufism. Anyone with even a casual degree of acquaintance with the theme of Sufism will be able to find examples within easy reach of such metaphysics and such literature.

SUFISM IN INDIA

What attracted the Indian people and the Indian saints of medieval India towards the Sufis who had established themselves at various centres in our vast land in the wake of the Muslim conquests, was what may be called the humanitarianism and liberalism of these saintly men who, though they professed another creed, yet breathed an air of human sweetness and taught a kind of universal moral doctrine and spiritual truths which appealed to the Hindu mind because, again, of the universal idiom in which these were couched. In course of time a catholic kind of language developed all over Northern India which took its character both from the Muslim and the native Indian background, and served, with differences of emphases no doubt the purpose of popular moral and spiritual instruction. At a lower level of appeal was the power believed to belong equally to the Muslim Sufis and the Hindu *sants* and *sadhus* of relieving mundane suffering and averting disaster. Here, again, a kind of common source of appeal and belief come to exist of which manifestations may be seen all over the country among the simple folk till our day. Sufism, therefore, did not in India remain a creed with an exclusive Islamic colouring— though of course it was such predominantly— but, while taking colouring

from its Indian surroundings, did in its turn exert a great influence over the thought, beliefs and culture of the Indian people, particularly in those areas where large Muslim populations had grown. This aspect will be taken up for further consideration later in the course of this article.

To revert to the subject of the origins of Sufism within Islam, this phenomenon has been known since within a hundred and fifty years of the death of the Prophet. Some of the early Sufis, great in the hierarchy, such as Zul-Nun Misri, Bayazid Bistami, Junaid Baghdadi, Ibrahim Adham and Hasan Basri belong to the eighth and ninth centuries; and already in their pronouncements many of the cardinal principles of Sufism had taken shape. The famous Mansur-ul-Hallaj whose name has become a symbol for the ultimate height of esoteric Sufistic experience, was condemned and executed at Baghdad in 921. One of the greatest books of Sufistic doctrine in Persian, entitled *Kashful Mahjub*, was written in India in the eleventh century, and the great philosopher Imam Ghazali propounded the synthesis of *Shariat* and the heterodox Sufistic thought of the day early in the twelfth century. After Ghazali, the limits within which Sufistic mysticism could be permitted to indulge in a kind of autonomous spiritual quest were determined, and since then Sufism has remained more or less crystallized as a respectable spiritual movement strictly *within Islam*. In the thirteenth century the great Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi in his *Masnavi* (*Mathnavi*) further crystallized this process and imposed on Sufism the strong superstructure of *Shariat* and Islamic socio-ethical thought. When Sufism came to India and began to make some impact on the masses, it had already undergone this transformation and had become thoroughly *Shariat*-based. Indian mysticism, covered by the blanket term Yoga was a free, unhampered quest of experience, and took many forms, particularly in the various manifestations of *Hatha* and *Tantra*. It was with the *sants* who practised the mysticism of *Bhakti* or Devotion that Sufism had contacts and found some parallels, tenuous though; and while the two streams ran parallel, here and there they fed a common pool at which the people drank. In their respective influence the two traditions acted differently because of their respective backgrounds and

circumstances.

Several explanations of the derivation of *Sufi* have been offered. The most acceptable appears to be that which connects it with *suf* (Arabic, for wool), as it was customary with the Sufis like the various orders of Christian monks, to wear rough woollen garments. This is also confirmed from the name given early enough in Iran to the Sufism *Pashmina-posh* (wearers of wool). In India, Sufis of various orders and even the non-Muslim mendicants of many varietites wrapped themselves in a woollen sheet. That wearing wool was a common practice with Sufis is evidenced by the use of *Kamali* in the Slokas or couplets of Farid, particularly in this one, on the theme of hypocritical conduct in those posing to be pious and spiritual:

(Many there are) carrying ever with them the prayer-mat,
wearing wool, wearing daggers in their hearts, yet sweet of speech;
Such appear to be bright in their outer aspect,
but are dark within as the moonless night.

(Sloka 50, p. 1380)

The mystical vision of Sufism — of a suprasensual Reality, of the pervading mystery of the universe, beyond the apprehension of human reason — came from two main sources. Partly it came from the Koran itself, in certain experiences narrated therein, and from certain sayings of the Prophet, embodying his moments of Vision; and partly from Neoplatonic philosophy, which became current early in the lands where Islam first spread. Of the first of these sources, there is, apart from the constantly reiterated mention in the Koran of Divine Might and the inscrutable ways of Allah, the great experience of the Prophet of the Ineffable Vision, called *Miraj* or Ascent. It has been expressed as the Prophet's view of Allah from a distance of "two bow lengths or ever nearer," and during this vision it is written of the Prophet: "He opened not his eyes to anything, from the intensity of his desire to see nothing but Allah the All-Highest." This is the embodiment of a mighty mystical vision indeed. The great poet Saadi, in describing it in Persian, makes Allah's messenger Gabriel say to the Prophet at a certain point in the Ascent: "Should I fly beyond this even as much the tip of hair, my pinions shall be signed in the effulgence of Divine Glory." The Prophet, however, ascended to where Gabriel

dared not. The declaration in the Koran that the heavens and the earth would not be created but for the sake of the Prophet, their ultimate *raison d'être* is again expression of a high mystical vision. Among the sayings of the Prophet is one expressive of deep and intimate communion with God: "I have now and then some moments with Allah which are available neither to any angel, however close to Him, nor to any of the Prophets." Recounting a battle fought and won by the Prophet, says Allah in the Koran: "When thou didst discharge the arrows, it was not thou who shot them, but Allah." There is then the ineffable Divine vision of Moses on Sinai in which "he was struck as with a lightning flash." The Koran consistently evokes man's sense of the mysterious, the ineffable and calls upon man to bow before the infinite Might of Allah. Indeed, such is the general direction of the teaching contained in it that a sensitive and imaginative soul is led inevitably towards the mystical experience. There is, of course, in the Koran also much that may not evoke mysticism but certain passions which have all through the centuries cemented together the Muslim world. But the mystical element is quite prominent and became naturally the basis for the Islamic mysticism or Sufism of the later centuries.

To amplify and enrich the mystical passion of which the germ is in the Koran and in the Prophet's Sayings, came into the early Muslim world the Neo-Platonic philosophy which had had such a vogue in the Byzantine empire. Sufism, as has been rightly said, developed in a world which had been permeated with Hellenic thought. Greek philosophy had come to Iran in the last period of the Sassanian empire, at Naushirwan's University at Shapur. The great Abbassid Caliph Mamun established a School of Philosophy called Bait-ul-Hikama at Baghdad. From these sources and from Syria came Neoplatonic philosophy which has all through the centuries kept such a hold over the Muslim mystical tradition.

From Neoplatonism came to the Muslim thinkers several of the basic ideas which have characterized Sufi thought. The most important of these is the Doctrine of ideas which postulates, in Muslim terms, the distinction between the Eternal (*wajib*) and the created and Perishable (*mumkin*). Nothing created is real—the only reality being God. This is the transmutation of Neoplatonism into

the terms of Muslim theology. Says a mystical poet of Iran, Auhad-ud-Din Kirmani, in terms Neoplatonic:

That which exists not of itself, it is
not wisdom to postulate existence of it:
What depends for existence on God.
Hath only a name but no reality.

A corollary to this postulate of the unreality of phenomena is the doctrine wherein all phenomena is viewed as only the vesture, the outer garment of Reality or Being. This thought is too well known to those familiar with mystical literature to need illustration. In the mystical poetry of Iran it finds expression with particular reiteration and emphasis and beauty of imagery. One of the most sensitive of the mystical poets of Iran, Iraqi, expresses this experience thus :

Like to the sun I am manifest in each grain of sand :
The very intensity of my manifestation conceals me from thy vision.

From such an attitude of mind follows a doctrine similar to Pantheism, implicit in Neoplatonism; though with Muslim mystics, it is given expression not in terms exactly of Pantheism ("All that is, is God") but through another Neoplatonic angle: ("All that is, is manifestation of the Divine.") Thus, the cardinal Sufistic doctrines of *Wahdat ul-Wujud* (indivisibility or Unity of all existence) and *shahud* (Universal Divine Manifestation) are seen to permeate all serious Sufi thought and poetry. The height of the mystical vision is to see God everywhere. Says the great mystical poet Jami: "Whatever appears to the sight, I take it is Thyself." Rumi's great Mathnavi narrates the vision of the Prophet thus:

Muhammad when his soul was rendered free of fire and smoke.
Saw the face of Allah wherever he looked.
He whose mind's door has been rendered open,
Sees the sun manifest in each sand-grain.

Iraqi, mentioned earlier, employing the imagery of music, which has such affinity with spiritual experience, says :

Love is strumming the instrument behind the Veil:
Where is the love-inspired soul to hear it?
With each breath a new melody arises:
Each moment a new note is struck.

The apprehension of pervading mystery, which can be seen by the sensitive, attuned soul, is the basic mould of Sufi thought,

and its sources lie in Neoplatonism, in those emphases of it which came to the Muslim thinkers.

Another idea which came into Islamic mysticism from Neoplatonism is what is known as emanation. This implies the Being is Light and is the source of the Inner Light. This Light is veiled from the mind covered over with gross material tendencies. As the mind and intellect get free of this gross covering, they acquire the capacity for apprehending this Light, which is Being and Reality. This is the awakening of the Soul. Mysticism has tended to express itself through the imagery of Light, and the blurring over of the vision of the soul which becomes clear as the gross covering is removed through self-discipline and the guidance of a preceptor. Such vision gives to man a feeling of his own greatness as a spark from the divine whose worth is greater than that of angles: at the same time it strikes him with humility and self-effacement through revealing to him Infinity, which is All-Goodness (*Khair-i-mahz*). The soul is compared to a mirror, reflecting Being. So long as it is covered over with rust (worldly desires, ignorance) it fails to reflect it. Through the process of purification, it is enabled to fulfil its function of reflection of Truth. Says Rumi in the *Mathnavi* :

Knowest then why thy Mirror reveals not anything?

This is so, because its surface is not free of rust.

Rub off the rust from its surface:

Then see that Light reflected in it.

The most splendid idea, the one which defines the objective of the Muslim mystics' spiritual quest, and has given rise to a vast volume of mystical-erotic poetry in the Muslim world is the idea thrown in a brief passage in Plato's Dialogue, *Symposium*, and developed further through Neoplatonic thought. This is the idea of love as spiritual attraction, the natural attraction of kindred souls separated in the universe, seeking reunion. This has been developed to imply Love as the Power at the basis of the universe, and the idea of each individual soul seeking to reunite itself with its source—God—of which it is but a separated particle. Stemming also from Plato is the idea of an ascending order in love—love of the concrete, by a regulated progression leading on in rare minds

to the love of the Idea. This exercise which in Plato implies the progressive growth of the abstracting intellect, in Neo-Platonism becomes deeply emotional and romantic, though the structure of the process remains essentially the same. In Sufism it is expressed by the postulate of *Majaz* (the implied or false) leading to *Haqiqat* (Reality). A Sufi saying in Arabic runs thus: "The implied is the bridge to Reality" (*Al-majaz quantart-ul Haqiqat*). This doctrine, while it originally meant only the awakening of the soul to a sense of the wonder and spiritual awareness to greater and greater apprehension of Reality, has got perverted through the centuries into hedonism and unspiritual ways of life, with which claimants to Sufism have often been charged.

Leaving aside the misapplications of the mystical doctrines of which examples could be gathered from Indian mysticism no less than from Islamic, it may be seen that while asceticism has been an essential feature of the Sufi's life, a kind of emotionalism and eroticism has equally well been a constant feature of such life. As against the rigidities of the cold formalism of the Code, *Shariat*, Sufism has held the appeal of the heart, in giving emotional expression to religion as love and the mighty spiritual experience of unworldliness, for which love is no less a channel of realization than asceticism. Either of these would bring to the soul, starved through the rigid life organized on the basis of *Shariat*, a powerful emotion which would give it the joy of a kind of fulfilment. This was the greatest appeal of Sufism for the common masses, who felt a new joy through it amidst their poverty and the exactions of tyrants.

Love, as a force parallel to asceticism, was brought into Muslim mysticism by Zul-Nun Misri and Bayazid-i-Bistami, both of them early fathers of the Sufi tradition. The spiritual quest was visualized as the quest for Reunion with the Beloved, who in the case of the mystic would be no mortal, but the Eternal Reality—God. The love-theme implied naturally the yearning in separation and all the usual states of experience which go with passionate and romantic love. Love (called *Muhabbat* or *Ishq*—both Arabic) was exalted to be the highest experience available to man, and was considered equivalent to worship, prayer, piety and any other pro-

cess involved in faith. A volume of rich and highly appealing poetry, with its own universe of symbols and peculiarities of style, has developed in the course of centuries in the languages employed by Muslims the world over, including those of India and Pakistan. Mystical poetry of spiritual love would employ the same kind of language and set expressions as the poetry of romantic love, and may very often be confused with it. This has been one of the reasons why puritan orthodoxy and formal religiosity has frowned upon the expression of Sufism, through love, which involved quite often choric singing and even a kind of dancing, both held reprobate practices in Islam. To cut short this part of the subject, which in its vastness and fascination is endless, one or two examples may be mentioned from high places in the Sufi literature.

In *Gulshan-i-Raz* (The secret Rose-Garden), a Persian scripture of Sufism of the fourteenth century, the author, Mahmud Shabistari, has included a whole section interpreting in Sufistic terms the concrete sensuous symbols like the Beloved's lock of hair, lip, eye, cheek and other objects of desire. These are, of course, interpreted spiritually, a somewhat strained application of Platonism. But this mode is firmly and deeply established in the Muslim poetic tradition, and has been for nearly a thousand years the source of some of the most splendid poetry coming from this source.

Then, mention may be made of the great opening lines of Rumi's *Mathnavi*, which has been called, because of its deep and highly spiritual-ethical exposition of Islam, the Koran in Pahlavi, that is, Persian. These opening lines here referred to are celebrated for their powerful expression of the philosophical Neoplatonic expression of Love as the sovereign spiritual mode—the yearning of the individual soul for its source in the Universal and the Eternal and the wail of its suffering in separation. Rendered into English, this piece runs :

Listen to the story of the Reed,
 And its plaint in separation,
 It says : Since the day I was uprooted from my reed-bed,
 Men and women have wept to hear my notes.
 I have broken my heart to bits in separation,
 So I may get the power to express the pain of love.

Whosoever is cast away from his source,
 Yearns for the Day of reunion.
 The Reed hath been touched with the spark of love.
 As Wine with its ferment.
 Whosoever hath his vesture torn in love,
 Is rendered free of all greed and evil,
 Blessed be thou Love, source of our joyful frenzy,
 And physician of all our maladies;
 Thou curest us of pride and false shame—
 Thou who are for us Plato and Galen in one.

* * * *

Whoever hath been separated from a kindred soul,
 Is destitute though possessed of worldly goods.
 Our wings and pinions are the lasso of love,
 Dragging us by the forelock to the Door of the Beloved.

There has been some speculation about influence from India on Sufism. The strong undercurrent of Pantheism in Sufism would suggest the influence of Vedanta, but, as may be seen, Neoplatonism has been perhaps a more authentic source for this aspect of Sufism. Buddhism may have had some distant influence, as in the pre-Islamic centuries it was the faith of the people inhabiting Eastern Iran and Afghanistan. Respect for the sanctity of life in Sufism may have come from this source, but all such influences would at best be distant and a subject of speculation only. In their austerities the Sufis perhaps followed the tradition of the Christian ascetics of the lands now called Asia Minor. Indian Hatha-Yogic influence may be seen in the Control of Breath (*Pas-i-Anzas*) which many of the Sufis, the most prominent being Bayazid-i-Bistami, practised. But Sufism has had its own traditions mainly rooted in Islam and Hellenic culture, and did not derive anything considerable from the parallel traditions of Yoga in India.

SUFISM IN INDIA—INFLUENCES

The Sufis came to India in the wake of the Muslim conquests of parts of Northern India. The invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni opened up Western and Central Punjab and the province of Multan to Muslim settlers and proselytizing agents of various orders. From early eleventh century we hear of Sufis from Afghanistan and Iran settling in the Punjab and gathering round them large congregations of devotees. One of the earliest of these was Sheikh Ali

Hujwiri, who became popular in Lahore and its surrounding areas, and was known as Data Ganj Bakhsh (The Bountiful Treasure-Bestower). Not long after were established, successively, Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti at Ajmer and Sheikh Masaud Farid Shakarganj at Ajodhan, Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya at Delhi and Pir Bahauddin Zakaria at Multan. There were other famous centres of Sufis, such as Panipat, Sunam and Sirhind between the Sutlej and the Jamuna. Other centres were at Gujrat, Sialkot, Hasan Abdal and at places further up north. It is obvious that these monasteries of the Sufis, called *Khanqahs*, could have been established only in areas where there were considerable Muslim populations. These Sufis (called *Sheikh*, *Pir*, *Khwaja*, *Shah* generally, and *Darvesh* and *Sain* with the implication of a lower status in the order) brought to the people, as said earlier, a brand of religion touched with emotion and a good deal of humanitarian feeling. These Sufis (for this is a generic, blanket term for all variety of Muslim holy men, outside the range of the formal Muslim priesthood constituted by the Maulvis or Mullahs) led pious lives, and engaged in charity which naturally endeared them to the people. They brought the healing touch in a society constituted on the one side by the orthodox Brahmin, practising an exclusive and narrow caste code, and on the other by combination of the Mullah and the Afghan or Turk noble standing for autocracy buttressed by the persecuting doctrine enunciated by the Mullah, arrogating to himself spiritual authority. The Sufi orders in this background present a varied and complex picture. While they are not known to have advocated persecution of non-believers (this would be repugnant to their teaching which professed to practise religion at a level higher than the Code or *Shariat*) they never seem to have pleaded with any Muslim potentate for a humane treatment of unbelievers, the Hindus. At their centres they drew large numbers of non-Muslims particularly of the less privileged classes, along with the Muslims. Besides such moral and spiritual teaching of a somewhat universal character as was imparted at these centres, there were also other attractions for the common folk. These holy men and their disciples were believed to possess powers of spiritual healing and of granting the fulfilment of desires and averting disasters. Many came to them with these

motives, and believed that they found what they sought. Hindu Yogis and Bhaktas of various orders were also practising the same arts as the Sufis and preaching various brands of unorthodox Hinduism. Thus, a two-way process of initiation was going on simultaneously. While the Sufis made converts to Islam by their sweet and humanitarian preaching and the healing which they were believed to practise, the Yogis and Bhaktas brought more and more Hindus under the influence of their own respective orders. The common folk, when they turned Muslim, naturally went outside the pale of Hindudom and became potentially hostile to it, though they retained many of their former Hindu customs and caste adhesions. The Hindus who came under the influence of Yogis and Bhaktas, while adopting some of the precepts of their new preceptors, retained, characteristically enough, all their caste practices as well, the later creed only overlapping the earlier. Thus, with each Sufi order and each Hindu Yogi and Bhakti order, new sects and subsects were being added to Islam and Hindudom, though the two vast traditions remained distinct.

But a distinction must be noticed here between the influence of the Sufis and the Yogis, etc, on the society of those times. While within Hindudom there was only the ramification of creeds and subcreeds and no real attempt was made at the regeneration of the vast masses who constituted it and no vital transformation was attempted, till we come to Kabir and Guru Nanak and the more enlightened among their contemporaries, the Sufis were rendering a valuable service to Islam in India. Their humanitarian and moral teaching was deeply rooted in Islam and each Sufi centre was a centre for proselytization to Islam. The common unprivileged folk particularly found the simple creed of Islam more attractive with the impression it created of equality between man and man, at least as against the Brahminical gradation of caste and the pervasive motions of ritual pollution which all castes below the three on top were supposed to bring. It would be a mistake, however, to believe that the preaching of the Sufis was the major factor which made for the spread of Islam among the masses. State policy exercised a tremendous influence in this direction, though the totally myopic vision of the upper classes within Hindudom who had lost

all capacity for active response in face of the vast national problem of the invasion of Islam, politically and socially, helped vastly the process of Muslim proselytization.

The Muslim Sufis, whose creed and principles were originally shaped in the early Muslim world of a highly Arabianized culture, mainly in the lands outside Arabia itself, imbibed in India a deep colouring from her soil. There was on the one hand what may be called the intellectual-academic formulation of Sufi doctrine and poetry. But this was imbibed naturally by the elite and the intellectuals. For the masses a simplified version of Sufism, comprising devotion to the person of the Prophet or some saint, and a general expression of the feeling of Immanence of God were what sufficed. For the common people the expression of this creed in the local dialects was made. A famous example of this is Baba Tahir Afghani, who composed Sufistic verse in the dialect of the province of Mazindaran in Northern Iran. As Sufism travelled towards India, it acquired the colouring of the dialects of the people lying along their path. There is, for example, a strong tradition of Sufi poetry in Sindhi, of which Shah Latif is the most conspicuous example.

SUFISM IN PUNJAB

As the Sufi settlements grew in the Punjab obviously in the beginning, the teaching of Sufism must have been in a dialect which came to be called Hindvi and later Rekhta, being a somewhat raw admixture of Persian and Arabic words with the dialects of the region. In such a background the highly academic and intellectual Sufism of Egypt, Persia and Iraq must have undergone a vast transformation. In the *madrasahs* and seminaries, the academic version must have been taught, and the greater among the Sufis must have been well versed in the classical lore of Sufism. But for imparting mass teaching to a people who came from an altogether alien tradition as were the indians, and in whom not much knowledge of Persian and Arabic could be presumed, the teaching must have been adjusted to the intellectual capacity of the listeners. After a generation or two the Sufi "dynasties" must have got acclimatized to India, and acquired proficiency in the local languages, and so must have adjusted the character of their teaching thoroughly to

the people who were to be the recipients thereof. This must further have implied the soaking of the Sufi doctrine in the traditions and experience of the local people, who in the first place were not Muslims seeking an escape from the rigid orthodoxy of the Mullahs, but had turned to Islam for spiritual solace and the moral way of life as against the Hindu Code which offered them no place of honour within its confines. Secondly, these were the simple working folk, not hedonistically inclined, whose familiarity with life was limited to their daily experience of work in the field and at home. So, the Sufistic teaching had to be adjusted in the directions to meet this contingency. In the first place, it was deeply humanized and imbued with a strong moral bias—the aesthetic and philosophical aspects being almost totally eliminated. Secondly, instead of the sights and sounds of Iran and Iraq, it was the daily life of the Punjab countryside in terms of which the Sufistic experience was now to be expressed. The entire mould and expression of this Sufism thus became such as was native to the Punjab, except that the content was Islamic and Sufi—with certain key-terms taken from Persian and Arabic; but constant use rendered them familiar. Such words as *Dildar*, *Jani*, *Mehram*, *Sahib*—all for God the Beloved; words like *murshid* (preceptor), *gunah* (sin), *tauba* (repentance), *arz* (prayer), *dil* (heart), *niyyat* (intention, motive), *hidayat* (spiritual guidance), *qabar*, *gor* (grave) and such others became familiar and passed into the idiom of the people, both Muslim and Hindu. In their language, apart from the mixture of a certain proportion of the Perso-Arabic vocabulary, the Sufis were as much of the soil as the non-Muslim teachers and preachers—perhaps more. While the common run of Hindu Bhaktas used some form of Braji in Punjab, it was the Muslim teachers who used Punjabi with great mastery in its various dialect forms, with the result that the earliest Punjabi poetry available and extant is that by Muslims.

Another thing to notice is that the period of the Sufistic penetration of the Punjab is subsequent to the resolution of the conflict between Sufistic heterodoxy and the orthodox doctrine of Islam, brought about through the writings of Imam Ghazali. So, these Sufis belonged to the phase (continuing since then) in which Sufism, instead of becoming an influence to modify Islamic orthodoxy or

becoming a free quest of the soul, got firmly tied to the Islamic *Shariat*; and Sufis became only a more humane order of the preachers and proselytizers for Islam. This was precisely what the Sufis in India, including the Punjab, had been. Most of them led very pious lives and were venerated by all alike; some like Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya withstood the despotic commands of rulers. But at the same time it must not be forgotten that their centres were active in the propagation of Islam. They brought to the masses much moral enlightenment in the process. This two-faced role it is important to remember, for the attitude of Guru Nanak towards Sufism appears to have been formed in consequence of his realization of this dual character it bore.

SHARIAT IN SUFISM

In the principal works on Sufistic thought there are unambiguous injunctions laid down as to the necessity for the Sufi to conform to *Shariat*. In *Kashful Mahjub* (11th century) towards the close, in the section entitled *Shariat* and Realization and the Distinction thereof, it is said : "The maintenance of *Shariat* without Realization is impossible. So also attaining to Realization without adherence to *Shariat*. *Shariat* without *Realization* is a fraud; while the claim to Realization except in consonance with *Shariat* is self-contradictory."

It is a historical fact that the author of this book, Sheikh Ali Hujwiri, known as Data Ganj Bakhsh carried on proselytization around Lahore on a considerable scale, and is known to have converted a Rajput chief, Rai Raju, whose subjects like him embraced Islam. Rumi in his *Mathnawi* has presented Islamic moral philosophy. What this famous book inculcates is not the unfettered pursuit of spiritual experience but the doctrine of orthodox Islam with a wealth of illustration and philosophical exposition. It is because of its conformity to orthodoxy that this book was such a favourite with poet Iqbal, who moulded his own orthodoxy on the impulse and inspiration provided by it. What Rumi and Iqbal aim at is the moulding of the orthodox Muslim character. Rumi here and there has the humane liberal touch, which it would be difficult to find in Iqbal except peripherally. The whole point to emphasize is that by the time Sufism came to the Punjab, its character as one of the

forms which Muslim orthodoxy took had been fixed, and that not only in respect of the Sufi being a good pious Muslim, but in his being actively engaged in one aspect of that twofold process of the Islamic conquest of India—by the sword and by the propagation of its creed.

Gulshan-i-Raz, already referred to (14th century) while defining the Perfect Man, that is, one who has attained Realization, says :

He should make *Shariat* his outer garment and Realization his lining.

(Couplet 351)

Further on, in couplets from 355 to 366 two figures are elaborated. One is that of the skin and the rind of a fruit. *Shariat* is the skin and Realization (*Haqiqat*) the rind—in between these is *Tariqat* (the Path) involving Sufistic discipline. It is emphasized that the Sufi's Realization would not mature without the prop of *Shariat*. The other figure is that of the point and the circle. *Shariat* is the point wherefrom the seeker must start, without which the circle of Realization cannot be described. In couplet 558 again, the necessity of conformity to *Shariat* is emphasized for the Sufi. Altogether, the Sufistic way of life is not mysticism in the sense of being an unfettered quest after spiritual light, but the path of the shaping of the moral life, firmly on the bedrock of *Shariat*, along the line of the imaginative and sensitive development of a wide awareness in the personality. While the greater among the Sufis would naturally be aware of the entire Sufistic tradition and its philosophical background, even those in humbler situations would be bound to Muslim society by all the traditional ties, and served as its missionaries. Their task was rendered easier by the establishment of Muslim rule and by the purblind and dead static conservatism of the vast world of Hindudom.

GURU NANAK AND MUSLIM TEACHERS

Guru Nanak visited the centres of the various orders of Muslim spiritual teachers, and even the holiest of holy of Islam, Mecca, with the urge in his soul to plead with the Muslim teachers—theologians and Sufis, Pirs and Sheikhs—to liberalize and humanize the idea of the religious life, particularly among their coreligionists. Inspiring him was also the conviction that while Islam and Hindu-

ism would keep their separate traditions, it should be possible to end the hate and strife which characterized the Indian religious and social life. What is important to notice is that rather than learn anything doctrinal or philosophical from the Muslim divines and hermits, he sought to turn their minds in the direction of his own great revelation—that men must find a way of reconciliation and brotherhood in an active spiritual and moral adjustment, and not only on the intellectual-aesthetic level of community singing which was indulged in the Sufi assemblies. Much less would he countenance the Sufi's propagation of Islam among the humbler classes of the Hindus. The spiritual starvation of the commonfolk, both Hindu and Muslim, was stark reality. Conversion from some Hindu creed or sect to a Muslim sect would not solve the spiritual and moral problem of the people as long as hate and strife and spiritual and moral blindness remained. Conversion to Islam, apart from Guru Nanak's realization that it involved national humiliation for the Hindu, was spiritually and morally irrelevant in face of the prevailing spiritual darkness. It was to draw the Muslim teachers into this vast movement of the spiritual regeneration of mankind that Guru Nanak took such pains to visit the Muslim teachers in their centres. That, except for a very few like Sheikh Ibrahim Farid and the descendant of Pir Bahauddin Zakaria, the Guru had little respect for the common run of the claimants to piety and miraculous powers among the Muslims (as also those among the Hindu orders) is evident from the contempt he pours on all such. In the context of Babar's invasion he has castigated the Muslim Pirs who asserted that their magic would strike the invading Mughals blind. They had, says the Guru, not foretold the Mughal's invasion ; on the contrary before the fury of the invader's hordes they were just helpless. Their monasteries went up in flame along with those of the Hindus; and Muslims suffered in the carnage made by the invader as much as the Hindus. So, the Guru obviously would not look upon the common run of Muslim hermits (Pirs, Sufis and others) as anyway worthy of emulation. Many of them, like Wali Kandhari of Hasan Abdal and Hamza Ghaus of Sialkot, were arrogant men, proud of their occult powers, and knew little humility or pity which are the essence of the religious life, and to which the

Guru has accorded such a sovereign place in his teaching. The Guru, however, has mentioned with respect the better and the nobler souls among the Muslim seekers of the spiritual life, without naming any one of these in particular. In one hymn among the genuine seekers after God he mentions *Salik*, *Sadik* (lit. Wayfarers and Genuine Devotees) (p. 358—*Adi Granth*). Elsewhere he has mentioned in a similar spirit *Dervishes* (mendicants—a common term for the Muslim hermit). In *Japji*, he says: "Listening to God's Name elevates one of the station of Sheikh, Pir and Patishah"—all mentioned in a spirit of reverence. Thus, the genuine among the Muslim seekers drew his approval. But nowhere does he mention the Mullah—the upholder of orthodoxy in the fanatical and contumacious spirit—with respect. Nor, of course, the Brahmin, his Hindu counterpart.

GURU NANAK—PURIFIER OF HINDU TRADITIONS

The Guru's criticism of the various orders of Hindu hermits and anchorites is much more detailed and sharper than that of the Muslims. That is because he belonged himself by birth to the tradition of Hindudom, and sought to purify and rebuild it. Consequently, he had to demolish the prevailing falsehood within it from the bottom; and so his tone is trenchant and his survey is detailed while bringing the corruptions within Hindudom under review. This does not need proof. A careful study of the Guru's word would substantiate this view. Furthermore, the Guru called men to the path of spiritual and moral life in terms of India's tradition by presenting a purely spiritual and moral view of Yoga : by Bhakti or devotion to the formless Brahma in the way that this tradition had developed in India ; and again by using the vast world of the imagery and symbology of India, drawn from its philosophy, epics and mythology. All this again is almost axiomatic and does not need proof here, which would only interrupt the course of the argument. In the Preamble to the *Japji*, and in its twenty-seventh stanza (*Sodar*) embodying the cosmic vision of Devotion ; in *Dakhni Oankar* and *Siddha Gosht*—each a comprehensive text on the spiritual and moral life—the entire coloring, vocabulary and the world of reference is Indian. Nowhere is there even the remotest mention of any aspect of the Muslim tradition.

NATURE OF GURU NANAK'S USE OF THE MUSLIM TERMS

Now to revert to the theme of the Guru's contacts with the Muslim teachers and any possible influence on him. It should be obvious on even a cursory study that he has not embodied in his own teaching any aspect of the theology of Islam. Islam has a long background in the traditions of the Jewish people, whose scriptures it adopted as precursors to the Koran, the revealed Word of Allah to Muhammad. The Prophets of Judaism have been adopted into the Muslim tradition—each with a particular significance added to his personality and teaching. Islam, besides, absorbed the cosmogony of the Jewish world, including its angelology. It also adopted many of the mythological traditions from the lands lying on the periphery of Arabia. Later, most of the myths and traditions of pre-Islamic Iran passed into Muslim lore. In less than half a millennium had developed within Islam a vast corpus of philosophy, jurisprudence and other academic disciplines besides the great Sufi lore. To postulate any kind of influence of Islam on Guru Nanak, it would have to be shown that he had thought fit to adopt into his own teaching any part of this complex tradition. Any serious study would fail to adduce evidence to prove any such attempt on the Guru's part. He did employ in his own teaching terms and concepts made current by nearly four centuries of the cultural influence of Islam in the Punjab. This can be evidenced by a study of his Word. Terms like *Pak Parvardagar*, *Karim*, *Rahim*, *Kudrat*, *Kurban* and others do not have any particular Muslim theological adhesions, but were taken from the current religious thought which, while it came from the circles of Pirs and Sufis, had become current among all sections of the people. In the Hymn on Babar the use of "Shaitan" has perhaps some reference to the fallen evil Archangel, but more predominantly carries the general signification of some evil power. In the same Hymn "Agad" (Arabic : *Iqd*) has reference to a Muslim code word, but its use here is general, symbolizing the general suffering of the people. *Katab* (Kitab—the Muslim scripture) is used either in combination with *Bed* (Veda—symbolizing the Hindu scriptures) to inculcate tolerance, or is used only in hymns the teaching of which is

obviously directed to the Muslims. The point to note is that *there is no expression of any spiritual or moral ideal in terms exclusively Muslim*. On the contrary, such ideals are expressed in terms Indian whether with reference to moral psychology or in terms of the embodying figures and symbols. Not to notice this or not to give to this point its due significance would be to take the direction and emphasis of the Guru's teaching out of focus. So many writers, who have not gone deep enough into the Guru's teaching, have tended to see in it an entirely non-existent Muslim slant. Much is made in this context of the Guru's emphasis on monotheism. This monotheism, however, is expressed in terms of the concept of the Supreme Being as Oankar, Purusha, Brahm, Akal—which has grown and developed in the Indian consciousness and of which the thoughtful, spiritually-minded Indian has had awareness since long before the birth of Islam. Guru Nanak, of course, gave a special monotheistic emphasis to this concept. His concept of the Supreme Being has clear reference to the evolving spiritual thought of India, with particular emphasis on its formlessness (*Nirakar-Nirankar*). In face of all the evidence pointing in this direction, to attribute to Guru Nanak a kind of derivative thought from Islam is only a hasty, immature conclusion. As suggested earlier, Muslim names for God—*Allah, Khuda*—and Muslim attributes such as *Kabir, Karim, Rahim, Parvardagar, Be-Aib*, etc, are employed to inculcate tolerance in the Hindu mind, closed to tolerance for the Muslim. The Muslim mind was, of course, equally sealed in intolerance. Hence the Guru's painstaking catholicity of choice of tradition in his teaching.

There are obvious parallels between the Muslim Sufi tradition and the Indian traditions of Yoga and Shakti. Each tended in the direction of a vision of Pantheism or complete Immanence—the vision of universe being pervaded by the divine, the universal soul. Each represented a reaction against some of the extreme forms of orthodoxy in their respective parent traditions. Each got amalgamated in some of its forms with Devotion—*Bhakti* in India and the doctrine of *Ishq* (love) in Sufism. But here we see the differences. The *Bhakti* of India belongs to the tradition of Vishnu-worship, while Yoga, particularly its *Hatha* variety which was the

one widely prevalent, was hitched to Shiva worship. Sufistic love was firmly directed to the Prophet of Islam or to Allah in His aspect as Beloved. As has been mentioned above, the Sufi doctrine of *Ishq* has roots and references which are Hellenic, while Yoga is embedded in the Sankhya Shastra with its philosophy of Three Qualities, and Patanjali's *Yogasutra* with its exposition of the path of transcendence of these. In later Yoga, which is pre-Islamic, body-culture and Tantric magic are predominant with emphasis on the Shiva cult with its numerous subsidiary forms. Muslim mysticism did develop its own occultism, perhaps under some kind of Indian influence. But there was strong ancient tradition of occult magic in Egypt, Iraq and Syria which would more certainly have directed the Muslim occultism. On the popular level Muslim and Hindu occultism in India often coalesced. Muslims would visit Hindu mendicants for spirit-healing and vice versa. Khwaja (Khizar), the Muslim guardian of the sea was, and still is, invoked by Hindu water-carriers and fisherfolk, while Bhairon (Bhairava—an aspect of Shiva) is invoked by Muslim practitioners of the occult black arts. But at the higher levels of enlightened Sufism and Yoga, the two traditions remained apart. In the Indian tradition Yoga and Bhakti often coalesced, but theoretically kept apart. In Sufism, the pursuit of enlightenment (*Maarifat*) often went with a kind of devotional rapture, which was generally approved.

At the popular level, Muslim Pirs and Hindu Bhaktas (there was little distinction popularly made between one kind of Hindu mendicant and another) had a fund of thought and sentiment (generally pietistic and human) in common; and while each class would express its thought and sentiments in terms of its own traditions, there was something like a common fund of teaching for Hindus as well as Muslims at the level closest to the masses. The Muslim mendicants particularly lent some keywords to their Hindu counterparts, like *Rabb* for God; *didar* for the divine revelation. Pair words for various aspects of the mystical context, one from each tradition, like *sabar-santokh*, *Guru-Pir*, *sadhu-fakir*, *din-dharma*, etc, became current. At a somewhat more sophisticated level would be Namdev's use of the pairs *Kalandar*—*Keshava* and *Abdali*, as in one of his hymns in *Adi Granth*. Hindu mendicants in groups

were known as *Jamaat* (group). This Arabic term used for the Muslim congregation passed into popular parlance, and is also used by Guru Nanak in *Japji* (stanza 28).

GURU NANAK'S TEACHING : A NEW MORAL SYNTHESIS

Guru Nanak, as said earlier, while he consorted with the Muslim teachers for discussion of spiritual and moral problems, and more than that to awaken in them as in the Hindu teachers the wider humanitarian and ethically oriented viewpoint about religion, does not show any doctrinal influence in him of Sufism. As a matter of fact, it would be a futile exercise to seek in his recorded Word any Muslim influence, Sufi or orthodox. With regard to the Yogis and Bhaktas, the Guru took up their teaching and practice, examined it in detail and brought his own corrective, for the details of which there is no scope in this article. He repudiated the entire system of *Hatha-Yoga*, whether of the "Right" variety or the "Left," and based the spiritual life firmly in prayer, meditation and moral action. While doing this he employed extensively the terminology of Yoga, defined the process and end of spiritual and moral endeavour through it, giving to the whole conception of Yoga a new orientation. The frequent reference to the *Gunas* which must be transcended into *Turia*, the fourth state, *Nirvana*, *Param-Gati*, *Moksha*, etc, the statement of the spiritual life in terms of the oozing of *Amrita*, of attaining to the "Tenth Door" (*Dasam Duar*) and all other related terms, shows him to be firmly attached to the Indian tradition, which he has examined, thoroughly reinterpreted and presented in a new moral synthesis. The same with *Bhakti*. The quietism of *Bhakti*, its centre in one Incarnation or the other he rejected, and hitched it on straight to the Supreme Being, conceived of as the Beloved, "of long tresses and beautiful pearly teeth," for whose sight the Bride-Soul yearns all through the months and seasons. *Bhakti* was made by the Guru the creed of those who are centred amidst moral responsibility on a vast, national and universal scale — something in the way of the Lord's Sermon to Arjuna in the *Gita*. He who treads this Path of Devotion "must come with the resolve to sacrifice life without demur." All this is as far removed from Sufism as from the prevalent Indian Yoga and *Bhakti*.

Some persons, groping to find parallels for Guru Nanak in Sufism, have tried to see the 'Khands' (Spheres of Spiritual Ascent) in *Japji* as parallel with the Sufi *Maqamat* (stages) of growing enlightenment. Such a parallel is untenable and without basis. The Sufi stages are serially : *Shariat* (Adherence to the Code); *Tariqat* (following the Sufistic discipline); *Haqiqat* (Awakening of the soul); *Maarifat* (Realization). The last stage in which the seeker may lose all consciousness of material phenomenon and cease to respond to the demand of the world, is *fana-fi-Allah* (Extinction of the Self into Allah). This last is parallel to the Yogic *Surya-Samadhi* or *Kaivalya*. Guru Nanak's tracing of the course of the spiritual ascent in the *Japji* is spiritual-moral in character, culminating in heroic, i.e., creatively noble conduct. The steps visualized by him are *Karma* (good actions in the mundane sphere); *Dharma* (directing life righteously); *Gian* (*Jnan* : spiritual awakening); *Sarma* (righteous endeavour). The final and highest stage is *Sach-Khand* (the abode of Bliss Eternal); which is the state of ineffable joy without end. This path follows a course which again is divergent no less from Yoga as commonly understood than from the Sufistic quest.

DIVERGENCE FROM SUFI MODE

Another divergence from the Sufi tradition may be noted particularly in the expression of the theme of Devotion in Guru Nanak. Sufistic devotional poetry in Persian has what it would not be inappropriate to call the homosexual character. The Beloved, as in the Socratic Dialogues, is implied to be youthful, adolescent male (the lover being a man). Heterosexual love does not find expression in Persian lyrical poetry, except very rarely. This is not so in Arabic poetry. The Beloved has male characteristics—the most marked being the growing "down" on the cheeks and lips (called in Persian *subza* or *khat*). In *Gulshan-i-Raz* under Query Thirteen, the Preceptor instructs the Novice-Questioner what the Eye, the Lip, the Eyebrow, etc, imply—meaning that these, like wine and intoxication, are symbols of Divine Beauty and the spiritual ecstasy. Further, under the same Query is an exposition of the "Down" and "Cheek" (Couplets 779 to 789). The implication of all this is too obvious to need elaboration. This tradition has continued in

Urdu poetry, which has inherited the modes of Persian, till we come to recent times when the influence of accepted Western *mo-res* has helped to bring about a change in fashions in love.

Muslim Sufis in the Punjab (and India as a whole), particularly because they were not living in a social vacuum, but were preaching to the common people with a view to attracting them to their own faith, adopted a number of the prevalent traditions of their adopted homeland. (Most were Indian by racial origin). This involved their adopting a number of Indian words, like *Sajan* for the Beloved ; *Sain* for *Pir*, *Data* as a tribute of God, and so on. Figures and symbols from the rural environment of the Punjab—its forests, fields, rivers, fords, the spinning-wheel, the persian-wheel, the potter's wheel and such others were adopted for the expression of spiritual thought and devotion. The Persian wine, the cup and cup-bearer (*Saqi*) and the entire sensuous apparatus was discarded for a homely atmosphere. In this new adaptation also occurred a basic symbolic change—the depiction of the loving, yearning soul as the love-sick female and the Beloved as the far-away Male—the Husband or the Philandering, Krishna-like beau. The Indian Sufi poets adopted this mode in its essence, without the Krishna love-story overtones. But the essential situation remained—the female lover and the Male Beloved. This characteristic of the devotional poems in Guru Nanak's compositions, of which the *Bara-Maha* sequel and other songs in the Measure Tukhari would be supreme example. But the mode is all over, and has resulted in some of the supreme devotional poetry of the world. The conclusion is obvious rather than adopt any of the Sufi modes, the Indian devotional poets (and Guru Nanak is of the number) gave to the Sufis a mode which they so successfully put to practice, in contradistinction to the Persian mode of the earlier part of their tradition.

On the medieval Indian religious scene there were of course influences of one tradition on another. But such influences were peripheral—touching not the core, the essentials but some feature here and there. The creeds, their metaphysics, cosmogony and, what may be called, their mythological world of reference, their epic and historical background did not, and could not, undergo

any changes. It was, as mentioned earlier, in the borrowing of certain words one from the other that there was cultural commerce between the creeds. With regard to Sufism on the one hand and Yoga and Bhakti the two archetypal hermit and devotional creeds of India, while there are certain common features, the origins of those may be seen to be independent of one another. *Samaa* or listening to devotional singing of the Sufis and *Kirtan* of the Bhaktas owe their origin each to a separate tradition. Bhakti began in the South in India before Islam made its impact, and popular devotional poetry and *Kirtan* were already distinctive features of it. These, of course, continued as Bhakti spread into other parts of India. Sufistic *Samaa* began in Iraq and Iran, and already in the eleventh century, Ali Hujwiri in *Kashful Mahjub* is discussing the problem of its permissibility, with an obvious hesitation about justifying what Muslim orthodoxy frowned upon. Sufism, Yoga and Bhakti, while these all commended loose long hair—again each by its own independent tradition — in India various types of hermits also went about shaven absolutely clean. In Indian places of worship some kind of a stretch of water near by is considered a necessary feature, while there is no such tradition in Islam. While most Indian hermit creeds are vegetarian, Sufis are not such. As a matter of act, a class of Muslim Fakirs, assimilated to the general Muslim hermit orders, are professional slitters of animals' throats over the recitations of the Muslim creed — The *Kalima* — after which the butcher must deal with the animal. With numerous such instances of differences, it is inconceivable how a viewpoint has been put forth of the "influence" of Sufism on Bhakti and, in the process, on Guru Nanak.

GURU NANAK'S TEACHING CENTRED IN TOLERANCE

The Sufis in the Punjab taught a humanized gospel rooted in the Islamic tradition. It would be fallacious for anyone to assert—what in effect has been — that Guru Nanak was preaching a kind of hotch-potch with bits and fragments borrowed from here and there. While this kind of thing might be said of some "Synthetic" recent creeds taught in India to small minority groups, it would be against the spirit of the great teaching of Guru Nanak, which grew from his vision of the universal truth, and the place of man in the

cosmos, the ideal life and the pure form of social relationship. All this could not be given to him by any pre-existing creed, but is the Revelation, the vision which the Creator vouchsafed to him.

For emphasizing tolerance, Guru Nanak did adopt a kind of blend of Hindu and Muslim hermit's apparel while he was on his "Pilgrimages of Truth" (*Udasis*) just as he used some significant Muslim religious terms with the same end in view. But with regard to this last, a caveat must here be entered. It is not any Muslim or Sufi doctrinal words that he has employed for the purpose of enunciating such doctrines, but has used Muslim words parallel to Indian words, for the expression of those truths which are fundamental to his own teaching. Without keeping firmly in view this essential feature, only a wrong and distorted view of Guru Nanak's teaching will be formed.

STUDY OF SUFI TERMS ADOPTED BY THE GURU

Certain terms made current in Sufi circles are found used in Guru Nanak's teaching, not for their doctrinal adhesions, but as the general, current coin of language. *Dargah* (Divine Portal) is one such. So is *Gharib*, *Miskin* (humble, unassuming) for depicting certain moral-spiritual attitudes. *Sahib* (Lord, for God) is frequently used. *Diwana* (Mad, God-intoxicated), *Mahal* (Mansion, Divine Abode, Divine Presence) and such others may easily be traced. The *Sufi Zikr* (Remembrance of God, Prayer) is not used as such, but its Indian equivalent with Indian overtones *Simran* (Skt. *Smaran*, Remembrance) is used as a key word in the development of the spiritual life. *Nadar* (*Nazar*) which literally means "glance" has been used in its applied meaning of "glance of compassion, grace."

In Guru Nanak's teaching there are, however, certain emphases which appear to have been occasioned by their prominence in the Sufi doctrine. There is, for example, his overwhelming conviction that man's own good actions might not be enough to achieve Liberation. In *Japji* it is said : "The vesture of the human body comes from one's actions; but the Door of Liberation is entered through grace" (Stanza 4). Elsewhere, certain individuals are spoken of as "those cursed at God's Portal, their boat stuck in quicksands." *Thake bohith dargah mar* (Page 153, *Adi Granth*).

Now, while in Indian thought the idea of *Prasad* (Grace) is there, it does not find quite such forceful expression and in Guru Nanak's teaching, enjoining humility and the realization that the Divine Order is beyond man's comprehension and hence by his own devices man may not be assured of realizing the ultimate goal. But in Islam such an idea does find emphasis. In one of the Traditions (*Hadith*) the Prophet is reported to have said: "None of you may obtain salvation by his own effort— not even I except that Allah may shower on me His mercy." In the Koran it is specified, again: "We guide those who have endeavoured in our way: They alone endeavour in our way whom we guide on our path." In the Koran, again, says Allah to the Prophet: "Thou canst not guide whomsoever it be thy will: Allah guides whomsoever He wishes, and He knows best who are inclined to be guided." The reiteration of a conviction similar to this in Guru Nanak and in the successor-Gurus to him is remarkable.

Again, *Hadur* (*Huzur*) as a spiritual term, implying the awareness of the Divine Presence in one's constant thought and hence the ever-prayerful attitude which occurs in Guru Nanak (*Japji*, Stanza 3) is again a Sufi esoteric term, going with its opposite *Ghaibat* (Absence, Indifference to God). *Didar* (the spiritual vision of Immanence) occurring so often in Sikh teaching and passed into the general Sikh parlance is only Persian for *Mushahada*. Both *Mushahada* and *Didar* are frequently spoken of in the Sufi experience.

Then remain the two key terms *Hukam* (*Hukm*) and *Raza* (*Reza*), without an understanding of which one would be in the dark as to the core of Guru Nanak's teaching. *Hukm* is generally used in Islamic thought for the injunctions of *Shariat* (especially in its plural form of *Ahkam*). For the Divine will *Amr* is used. But *Hukm* is used in Sufi thought also in the sense of the Divine Ordinance in which it occurs in Guru Nanak's teaching. There are, besides, other philosophical implications of this word, but it does occur also in Guru Nanak's sense in *Kashful Mahjub* in relation to the Sufi sects.

Raza (*Reza*), a key word in Guru Nanak's teaching and one which because of this has passed into the current idiom of the Sikh

people particularly and of Punjabis generally is taken, if there be one term which is so taken, from the Sufistic philosophical context. Literally, it stands for the quiet acceptance of God's will. This word, its derivatives and its synonyms are used with overwhelming reiteration in Muslim thought from the Koran down, in this and in its related sense of Will — Divine Will. In Sufism the principal sense in which this important term is used is acceptance, resignation. In *Kashful Mahjub*, *Raza* is employed and defined in these different senses: (1) acceptance of the Divine Will (ii) Complete surrender to God (iii) Complete liberation of the mind from desire (iv) Surrender of the will unto God (v) Divine will or Ordinance. In *Gulshan-i-Raz* (Couplet 561) *Reza* is used in the sense of surrender, resignation to the Divine Ordinance. So also in Book (*Daftar*) V of Rumi's *Mathnavi*, where it is given extensive exposition. In Guru Nanak's teaching this word is used in that at No. (v) as employed in *Kashful Mahjub*, that is, Divine Will. This remarkable term must have appealed to Guru Nanak as highly expressive of the inscrutable mystery of the Divine Ordinance, which the human intellect is powerless to penetrate and in face of which complete surrender or resignation is the only proper attitude. In the Indian thought surrender is a well known religious attitude, as for example in Gita whose moral teaching turns upon surrender to God's Will, in resigning the "fruits" of action unto Him. This thought, in consonance with Gita, is expressed by Guru Nanak repeatedly; and in places in words similar to those used in this context in Gita. For the Divine Will, for which an equally expressive word or phrase perhaps was not available in the Indian tradition, the Guru employed this Sufistic word, *Raza*, with those rich overtones.

This has been a discussion, often peripheral, of Sufism as it developed outside India and of whatever influence it shed around itself after it came to India, its character within India and its borrowings from the Indian scene. This topic is vast, particularly as Sufism was felt as an influence over wide areas of India — Sind, Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal. Its study, in relation to the thought and devotional literature of these areas must certainly be a deeply engrossing line of enquiry.

TANTRA YOGA AND THE GURU GRANTH*

S. S. KOHLI

The Tantras constitute a large part of Indian religious literature. There are Buddhist Tantras as well as Hindu Tantras. The Tantras of the Buddhists and Jainas are called *nāstika* Tantras and the Tantras of the five Bhakti cults, viz. Vaishnava, Shaiva, Shakta, Saura and Ganapatya are known as *āstika* Tantras. The Tantric works are classified as *Āgama* and *Nigama*. Whereas the word 'Sānhita' is generally applied to Vaishnava Tantras and *Āgama* is applied to Shaiva Tantras, the Shakta works are called Tantras only. Ordinarily, the word *Nigama* is used for the Vedas but in their classification of Tantric works, the Shaiva-Shakta cults designate those Tantras as *Āgamas*, in which Shakti appears as a pupil and Shiva as a teacher. Those Tantras are designated as *Nigama* in which Shakti is a teacher and Shiva, a pupil. In the *Ādi Granth*, the three words *Āgama*, *Nigama* and *Tantra* are used in a hymn of Kabir :

One may have knowledge of Āgamas, Nigamas, astrology, rules of grammar, Tantras and Mantras, but he also dies in the end.

(Asa Kabir, p. 476)

Wherever the word *Tantra* has been used in the *Ādi Granth*, it is accompanied by the word *Mantra*. According to Sanskrit lexicons, *Tantra* is a religious treatise teaching mystical and magical formularies for the worship of the deities or attainment of superhuman powers. The stalwarts of the Bhakti tradition, such as Guru Nanak Dev and Kabir, rejected the worship of gods and goddesses and also decried the use of superhuman powers gained through religious practices or certain forms of devotion. Therefore they

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called such beliefs and practices “hypocrisy” (*pakhand*). Their Tantra-and-Mantra is only the Name of the Lord.

‘Tantra’ means the warp or threads extended lengthwise in a loom. It implies a process of weaving and expansion. The word Tantra is derived from the root *tan* (to spread). It signifies the increase in knowledge. It also implies the dilation of the Tantra Shastra on *tattvas* and *mantras*. Some derive the word *Tantra* from the word *tanu* (body). In this respect, *Tantra* saves the body by Yogic practices. There are others, who derive the word Tantra from the root *tantri* (to explain), which may imply that Tantra Shastra expounds the categories of Shaivism.

‘Mantra’ is a mental sound. It is mostly used in conjunction with the breathing disciplines. The rhythmical concentration of the Mantra is called *Japa*. The distinct form of a *mantra* is known as *yantra*. All *mantras* except the Name of the Lord have been rejected by *Ādi Granth* : “The Mantras, the charms, the panaceas and the pious deeds are within the Name of the Lord” (Gauri Guareri, 5, p. 185). The concept of *Sphotavāda* or *Shabda-Brahman* is the basis of Tantric sound-theory and Tantric *mantra*-practice. According to this concept, everything originates in sound. This concept is found in the *Ādi Granth* :

The creation and Dissolution of the universe is through the Word;
The Evolution of the Creation again is through the Word.

(Mājḥ, 3, p. 117)

The Mantras or the Tantras are invocations to the *devatās* (Deities). A *mantra* may be prayer in words or it may be combination of syllables called seed-*mantra* (*bija-mantra*). In the *Guru Granth* the concept of *mantra* is limited to that *mantra* which constitutes only the sound-bodies of Brahman. The seeker, in this school of thought, has nothing to do with other gods and goddesses. The *mool mantra* (primary formula) which has been repeated hundreds of times in the *Ādi Granth*, depicts only the nature and attributes of Brahman. The *Bija-mantra*, i.e. *Wāhu-Gurū* is expressive only of the wonder about the inexpressible Enlightener. It is a reproduction of the original sound vibrations, in human speech, that accompany the manifestation of all-pervading Brahman. According to Guru Arjan Dev “the knowledge of *Bija-mantra* is meant for all the four castes” (p. 274, Gauri Sukhmani, 5). He says again, “Sing

the seed-*mantra*, which contains the praises of the Lord (Brahman)" — (p. 891, Ramkali, 5). Saint Beni says, "He who enshrines the seed-*mantra* in his heart, his mind turns inward within the Absolute (*Śunya*)" — (p. 974, Ramkali, Beni).

When the *mantra*-sound is given a form, it is known as *yantra*. whereas a *yantra* is the form of a sound, it is also a point of contact with the source of the sound. There has been a practice among the Tantriks to use *yantra* as a *Kavach* (coat of mail) for the protection of an individual from impending dangers. Guru Arjan Dev says : "The Mantra of the Name of the Lord is the coat of mail for the devotee," — (p. 868, Gond, 5). A *yantra* within an amulet was tied round the neck of an afflicted person with a thread by the Tantrik in order to create the desired effect. The *Ādi Granth* is averse to such practices. Guru Nanak Dev says, "The charmer (*tantrik*), practising charms, ties the many-coloured thread round the neck. The charmer is of shallow mind and intellect..." — (p. 582, Vadhans, 1).

In order to make the *mantras* efficacious, various rites are prescribed. An extremely important rite is called *purashcharana*. It consists of five elements, viz. *japa* or muttering of the *mantra* for a prescribed number of times, *homa*, *tarpana*, *abhisheka* with the same *mantra* and the feeding of the Brahmins. The offering of worship is to an image of the deity, placed on a consecrated pitcher full of water, alongwith fruit and mango sprouts. The worship may be offered on a *yantra* (mystic diagram) representing the deity. This rite of *purashcharana* has been mentioned in the *Ādi Granth* as *Punahacharana* :

If he performs *punahacharana* several times, he is unable to cross (the ocean of *samsāra*).

The Name of the Lord washes off millions of sins.

(p. 264, Gauri Sukhmani, 5)

Tantras believe that the initiation by a Guru is essential. It is the Guru who can decide the suitability of a particular *mantra* for a particular disciple. Initiations of special types are known as *Abhisheka*. In the Tantrik tradition, the Guru is the pivot round which the spiritual life of the seeker revolves. This is perhaps the only resemblance between Sikhism and Tantricism. It is written in Vishvasara Tantra :

The appearance (*murti*) of the Guru is the root of Dhyana, the lotus-foot of the Guru is the root of Puja, the word of Guru is the root of Mantra, and the grace of Guru is the root of Siddhi.

A similar view has been expressed in the *Ādi Granth* :

The *mūrti* (appearance) of the Guru be within the Dhyana of the mind, accept the word of the Guru as *mantra* in the mind, enshrine the Guru's feet in the mind and always salute the Guru, the Transcendent Lord.

(p. 864, Gond, 5)

Tantras have emphasized the Motherhood of God, known as Shakti but Shakti is inseparable from Shiva. They are considered two modes of the manifestation of Brahman. Shiva and Shakti are ultimately one and appear as Purusha and Prakriti, i.e. spirit and matter. Shakti is the kinetic energy of Brahman and Shiva is the static aspect. Tantras believe in the reality of the world and have urged for the worship of Divine Energy i.e. Shakti. In the *Ādi Granth*, it is said :

Shiva came to reside in the house of Shakti.

(p. 1027, Maru, 1)

Shiva and Shakti were created by God Himself and His Order pervades the whole universe.

(p. 920, Ramkali, 3, Anand).

Both the aspects i.e. Shiva and Shakti are created by You, O Lord, But this is Your Will that Shakti loses before Shiva.

(p. 1096, Var Maru Dakhne, 5)

The Lord put both Shiva and Shakti within the body.

(p. 1056, Maru, 3)

Shiva effaced Shakti and darkness was dispelled

(p. 163, Gauri Bairagan, 3)

Evidently, the above verses of the *Ādi Granth* take a very different line regarding the concepts of Shiva and Shakti.

Tantra Yoga is also called Kundalini Yoga or Kundali Yoga. *Kundalini* is the central psycho-physical latent power in man. *Kundalini Shakti* is also known as "Serpent Power" or the atomic energy of the microcosm. It is great power-potential within the body. The basic concept of Tantric *sādhana* (practice) is Kundalini-Yoga. *Kundalini* is the dormant spiritual energy within the human body. It is like a serpent coiling at the lower end of the vertebral column (*Merudanda*). There is a correlation between the psychic body, i.e. Kundalini, and the physical body.

The basis of Tantra Yoga is Hath Yoga. The discipline of Hathyoga is related to the concept of Panch-Koshas, that is, the five sheaths which cover the soul. The work of Hathyoga starts with the first *kosha* called *Annamaya Kosha*, which is the concrete visible body. The next *kosha* i.e. *Prāṇamaya Kosha* plays a dominant role, because the pivotal core of Hathyoga is *Prāṇāyama*. The practice of *Prāṇāyama* within the human body empowers the yogi to control the mind (*Manomaya Kosha*) and intellect (*Vigyānmaya Kosha*) before he reaches the final covering, i.e. *Anandmaya Kosha*, the sheath of bliss. The practice of *Prāṇāyama* in a disciplined manner leads the Hathyogi to the knowledge of a unique divine power within the body, namely *Kudalini* or the Serpent Power.

This Serpent Power is awakened by the Tantric Yogi through an elaborate process of purification. This process involves *Asanas*, *Mantras*—*Prāṇāyama*, *Nādis* and *Chakras*. As a result the yogi acquires *Siddhis* (powers) such as *Animan* (reduction of the matter to the minimum), *Mahiman* (expansion to any limit), *Laghiman* (lightness), *Gariman* (heaviness), *Prapti* (knowledge of past, present and future), clairvoyance, mastery over the physiological instincts like sleep, hunger, thirst etc., transformation, transference of consciousness, cosmic consciousness and knowledge of distant galaxies. It becomes possible for the Yogi to sustain without food-stuffs and live only on subtle elements.

The process of purification includes *Dhauti* (cleansing out the stomach), *Basti* (cleansing of the recto-colon by sucking water and then evacuating it), *Neti* (cleansing of the nose), *Nauli* (cleansing of the small intestines), *Tratak* (cleansing of the eyes through unwavering gaze on a luminous object), and *Kapāl Bhati* (cleansing of the intestines through *prāṇāyama*). These purificatory processes not only purify the body but also prepare the *sadhak* (yogi) for seeing divine light and hearing the divine sounds. These processes are to be performed under the expert guidance of a Gurū. The Guru also gives knowledge of various *Asanas* (postures) besides giving the suitable *mantra* and required discipline of *prāṇāyama*, various *nādis* (ducts/nerves) in the body and the *chakras* (centres).

The process of *Prāṇāyama* consists of *Purak* (inhalation),

Kumbhaka (retention) and *Rechak* (exhalation). There are eighty-four Yoga Asanas. Seven postures suitable for meditation are Siddhasana, Padmāsana, Bhadrāsana, Muktāsana, Vajrāsana, Swastikāsana and Yogāsana. There are thousands of *nādis* in the human body, but three of them are principal channels of spiritual force. They are *Ida*, *Pingala* and *Sushumna*. The most important is the Sushumna, through which the yogic power works. There are six Chakras or centres of subtle forces. They are *Muladhar Chakra* (situated at the bottom of the backbone adjoining the anus), *Swadhisthan Chakra* (situated at the root of the genital organ), *Manipur Chakra* situated just opposite to the navel), *Anahata Chakra* (situated just opposite to the central line in between the two nipples), *Vishuddha Chakra* (situated opposite to the throat), and *Ajna Chakra* (situated at the base of the nose and in between the two eyebrows). Above all these centres, there is *Sahasrar Chakra*, situated in the topmost part of the cerebrum.

The Tantric Yogi, with the combined practice of *mantra* and *prānāyama* awakens Kundalini, the serpent power, lying coiled up at the base of the spine. The three *Nādis*, *Ida*, *Pingala* and *Sushumna*, also arise from the base of the spine, where *Muladhar* centre is situated. *Ida* and *Pingala* go to the spot between the eyebrows, from where *Ida* goes up to the left nostril and *Pingala* up to the right nostril. *Sushumna* passing through the spinal column centre goes to the head, where it meets *Ida* and *Pingala* between the eyebrows. On awakening, Kundalini opens the closed mouth of *Sushumna* and rises upwards passing through *Muladhar Chakra* (base Centre), *Swadhisthan Chakra* (Abdomen centre), *Manipur Chakra* (Navel centre), *Anahata Chakra* (Heart centre), *Vishuddha Chakra* (Throat centre) and reaches the *Ajna Chakra* (Brow centre), the place of the confluence of the three *Nādis*. The journey of the Kundalini ends when it reaches the *Sahasrar Chakra* (Head centre) from the *Ajna Chakra*. Here the Yogi realizes Para Brahman, the Primal Guru. The yogi meditates on the lotus feet of the Primal Guru and tastes the nectar which flows in constant stream from the *Sahasrar*. Such is the *sadhna* (practice) of a Tantric Yogi.

The *Ādi Granth* rejected the above-mentioned complicated and difficult practices of the Tantric yogis in their process of puri-

fication. It believes that the Divine Power can be awakened in the human being through pure life and profound devotion. There is a mention of Kundalini only once in the *Ādi Granth* in the verses of the Bhatts (bards) :

They who believe in the eternal truths of the Guru's Word, like Dhruva, they attain immortality;

They ferry across the tumultuous ocean of *Samsāra* immediately and consider the world as cloud's shade.

Their *Kundalini* is awakened in the company of the Saints and they realize the Lord of Supreme Bliss through the Word of the Guru. (Page 1401, Swayya of Gayand)

There is also an indirect reference to *Kundalini* in the verses of Guru Nanak.

In addition, the saints Beni, Namdev and Kabir make a mention of the three Nadis, i.e. Ida, Pingala and Sushumna, in their hymns in the *Ādi Granth*.

But, it is clear that the Tantrik discipline was not the belief of these saints, though they used the Yogic terminology in their verses.

Kabir has made a mention of six *chakras* (centres) in one of his hymns :

The yogi has overturned the Prana and pierced through the six Chakras (centres) having his insight in consonance with the Void,

O ascetic, search for Him, who neither takes birth, nor dies, neither comes nor goes. (p. 333, Gauri Bairagan, Kabir)

In another hymn Kabir says :

The cabin of six chakras was built and an incomparable thing was put in it.

The Lord made the Pranas the protectors like the lock and key without any delay.

(p. 339, Gauri, Kabir)

The incomparable thing is the soul and the main motive of the saint in using the Tantric terminology is to exhibit the efficacy of the discipline being followed by him.

The *Ādi Granth* is critical of the Mandalas or mystic circles of the Tantriks. According to Guru Arjan Dev :

A person who observes the discipline of *Panch Makara* and has all the five vices,

Who always utters lies with his tongue,

If he draws a mystic circle (*mandala*), he is a hypocrite,

He wastes away in anguish like a widow;

Everything is false except the Name of the Lord,
 Without the perfect Guru one does not attain deliverance,
 the Shakti is robbed in the Court of the Lord.

(Page 1151, Bhairo, 5)

Panch Makara of the Tantras are five essential ingredients of Tantrik initiation of Vamacharis (left-hand Tantriks). They are : *Madya* (wine), *Matsya* (fish), *Mansa* (meat), *Maithuna* (sexual intercourse) and *Mudra* (interweaving of fingers during religious worship). Since they all begin with the letter "M", they are known as *Panch Makara*. They are the ingredients of the *sādhana*. The Yogi sits with the Yogini for a particular *sādhana* within the mystic circle along with the *makara*, i.e. wine, meat, fish and grain (for *Mudra*, grain is used). The Yogini meant for sexual union sits on the left of the Yogi and the Yogini meant for *puja* sits on right. Because of its degeneration, the saint-poets of the *Ādi Granth* are critical of the Tantrik Sadhana. In the words of Prof. Nalini Kanta Brahma, the author of *Philosophy of Hindu Sadhana* : "The Tantras vile their teachings under the garb of cryptic words and symbols. People uninitiated in the mysteries of deep spiritual significance embodied in the symbols, very often misunderstood these latter and engaged themselves in dark and obscene and definitely immoral practices with the false idea of following the genuine Tantric methods."

THE WORD : A STUDY IN CHRISTIAN-SIKH DIALOGUE*

ANAND SPENCER

In his book *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, Panikkar says : "Christianity and Hinduism both meet in Christ. Christ is their meeting-point. The real encounter can only take place in Christ, because only in Christ do they meet . . . according to Christianity and according to Hinduism as well, they can only meet in Christ, if they meet at all."¹ A question arises : Why cannot they meet in Kṛṣṇa or Rāma or Viṣṇu or in any other symbol of divinity or in any other concept? Why in Christ only? Panikkar has his own answer : "Christ makes sense at least for the Christian and can be made understandable—if not acceptable—to the Hindu too, whereas a parallel statement about Viṣṇu would not make sense for either of them."² How far this answer is acceptable to a Hindu is debatable. The assertion that Christian and Hindu can only meet in Christ should also be seen and studied from a Hindu standpoint. And in order to know the Hindu perspective we must listen to the Hindu. It is very likely that a Hindu may put forward a counter assertion that Christian and Hindu can only meet in Kṛṣṇa or Rāma or Viṣṇu or some other symbol of divinity. Will that assertion be acceptable to a Christian . . . ? How far some particular concept of one religion can become a point of real and genuine dialogue between two religions is a difficult question to answer.

For Christians, the assertion that 'we meet in Christ' or 'Christ is the meeting-point' is understandable. They can see, explore and discover all possibilities in 'Christ' for an inter-religious meeting. It is a concept which they can apply for an encounter with any

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religion. They can apply that in the case of Christian-Sikh encounter and can claim that Christian-Sikh meeting is possible in Christ, because Christians have their own perspective of Christ in which they find all possibilities of a real encounter or meeting between Christian and Sikh. But a similar question, as before, arises here also : Why do not they (Christian and Sikh) meet in Guru or in any other Sikh symbol or concept? Has not a Sikh an equal right to claim that Christian and Sikh can meet only in Guru or in any Sikh sacred symbol or concept? Will that be acceptable to the Christian?

Does 'Christ' or 'Guru' offer a common point, a starting point for a Christian-Sikh dialogue? This is a question whose answer demands a thorough investigation. 'Christ' and 'Guru' do not seem to offer a common basis for the two religions to initiate a dialogue. They are two different entities, two different figures or personalities. They ('Christ' and 'Guru') may be involved in a later stage in the dialogue and they may play a decisive role in inter-religious understanding, but they do not appear to be the immediate point of contact or a point of departure, a starting point for a dialogue.

The history of Christian-Sikh relationship and also the history of Christian-Sikh dialogue reveals the fact that both religions have not been able to develop an intimate dialogical relationship and a deep inter-religious understanding. However, they know each other to some extent, academically if not dialogically. They seem to be more or less in a state of searching, or 'seeking community', desiring to relate themselves to each other in a fruitful manner. The history of their dialogue also reveals the fact that they need a common basis for a fruitful dialogue whereby the two religions can grow to new heights in their relationship and understanding. Hence the question : What can be such a meeting-point for fruitful Christian-Sikh dialogue and understanding?

The comparative study of Christianity and Sikhism in relation to the concept of Word yields striking similarities and points of common perspectives which can be considered as starting points for a Christian-Sikh dialogue. Even points of difference can be considered as unique aspects of understanding one and the same idea in each tradition. These may be regarded as new dimensions

in understanding the same reality of Word which is manifested in the other tradition. It is not necessary that these new dimensions or perspectives of different understanding should be accepted by the other tradition. No agreement on such points of differences is expected to be imposed upon the partners. This is the basic assumption of the theology of Christian-Sikh dialogue. These points of differences or particularities need to be understood from the standpoint of its sponsor(s).

THE WORD—A COMMON BASIS OF DIALOGUE

From among many other concepts, the idea of Word appears to be a more suitable meeting-point for a real and fruitful Christian-Sikh dialogue. There are other concepts which, in spite of certain mutually acceptable connotations, involve persistingly characteristic peculiarities about themselves that they tend more to distinguish and differentiate both the traditions than to build up a common basis to initiate a real dialogue. The discussions on those concepts often amount to an academic comparative study of religions which tend to become monologues; they can hardly be called dialogues. This has become obvious from the past experience of seminars and consultations on theological doctrines and concepts. Two recent seminars on 'Theology : Christian-Sikh' and 'Nature of Guruship' were such occasions when it was sought to make a comparative study of the idea of God and Guru in Christian and Sikh traditions.³ The reason why these occasions could not become opportunities for real and genuine dialogue lies basically, perhaps, in the fact that these concepts involve exclusive characteristics in their meaning and application in the two traditions. In spite of discovering certain similarities and parallelisms, the participants could not arrive at a common basis which could eventually lead them to a real dialogue. To start a dialogue with peculiar and dissimilar concepts is a difficult task. The strangeness and unfamiliarity of each partner will persist; these may often hamper and even prohibit any inter-communication. For example, if a Christian wants to start a dialogue with a Sikh and chooses the concept of 'incarnation' as a theme, a real dialogue would seem to be impossible to start, as the Sikh totally rejects the concept of 'incarnation.' 'Incarnation' is not a common basis for a real dia-

logue between Christianity and Sikhism. Even to make conversation possible on 'incarnation', some mutually acceptable point has to be traced. Likewise, if a Sikh chooses a topic like the 'theology of the Sword' for a dialogue with a Christian, he will have the same difficulty. If at all a dialogue on such topics is attempted, it may not turn out to be a dialogue of mutual sharing, experiencing and understanding. Rather, it may be a monologue or an occasion for unilateral talk in which one side expounds its concept and the other partner is only a listener rather than a participant. It will more be one-way traffic.

An idea or concept acceptable to both the traditions will be more conducive to a proper dialogue than topics with peculiar characteristics. Such a concept being a common point to both, creates and establishes a two-way traffic, an equal passage, an equal opportunity and equal possibility to pass into, to enter into each other's religious realm. When a dialogue has already been started based on such a common concept, topics particular to each tradition like 'incarnation' and 'sword', in the case of Christianity and Sikhism, may not look alien to each and it might be possible to understand them by relating them to the common point established.

A true encounter, a genuine dialogue between Christianity and Sikhism can take place only where both the traditions can meet. And meeting involves mutuality which is possible and practicable only on a common basis. Christianity cannot meet Sikhism on a point which is not acceptable to Sikhism; likewise, Sikhism cannot meet Christianity on a point which is not intelligible to Sikhism. They cannot meet where they oppose, resist or ignore each other. Meeting is possible only on a point which is mutually acceptable. Word or Sabad seems to be a fairly efficient common point which is mutually recognizable in both the traditions for an inter-religious dialogue, which can deepen inter-religious understanding and establish dialogical relationship between the two religions. Word is a concept common to both the traditions. When Christians and Sikhs use their respective terms "Word" or "Sabad", they mean to a great extent the same thing. They refer to the same reality. Word or Sabad, at various levels, reveals the same metaphysical insight in both the traditions. Its involvement in the theology of both the

systems points to the same goal. It serves to explain the nature and mystery of God and the mystery of creation. Word or Sabad starts with the same theological question, the idea and nature of God. And in answering this basic question undeniable similarities are visible in the two systems. Both the traditions associate Word with God, and from this association is derived its essential meaning. The other connotations in the two systems are developed from this basic assertion. God is the most common meeting-point of all the theistic religions. Though the doctrine of God in each religion may have its own characteristics or emphasis, God remains the common ideal in all the God-believing faiths. Since Word is fundamentally associated with God, it assumes the character of a central point which can provide the basis for a real Christian-Sikh dialogue.

THE WORD AND THE COMMON THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

There are some basic theological questions which are common to both Christianity and Sikhism. The most common and basic problem is the mystery of God and the mystery of creation. The concept of Word is involved in a significant manner in explaining these mysteries and in answering these basic theological questions in both the traditions. In this context, Word provides often similar, if not always identical, answers in Christianity and Sikhism. A Christian's question about the concept of God may be answered, without fear of contradiction, by the theology of Sabad of Sikhism. He will find that this answer is very similar to that provided by the theology of the Word in Christianity. The same will be true if a Sikh were to ask the question and receive an answer in terms of the Christian theology of the Word. Thus, in answering the common question some similar, mutually recognizable and intelligible aspects are discovered. This helps in creating a mutuality of perspective on the doctrine as it is understood in the two traditions.

Here, it would seem opportune to point out why the Christian-Sikh dialogue on the doctrine of God (held in 1972 at the Christian Institute of Sikh Studies, Batala) could not achieve a real dialogical level. Participants on both sides just explained their respective concept of God unilaterally and did not try to discover a

common point which would have facilitated their understanding of each other's doctrines more clearly, deeply and intimately. The categories used for explanation were rather distinctly one-sided in their nature at various levels. The Christian's talk on the Triune God disturbed the Sikhs who found it difficult to reconcile that idea with the professed monotheism of the Christians. Likewise, Christians were often confusing the Sikh view of an immanent God with Hindu pantheism. A concept like Word would have made the occasion more meaningful and proved helpful in bringing the respective viewpoints into sharper focus and making them more clearly intelligible to each other. This would have laid the foundation of a more intimate dialogue.

Both the traditions accept the belief in the pre-existence of Word. And they come closer to each other in discovering the relationship between the Word and God of the pre-existent state. This doctrine should have helped both sides to understand the idea of Triune God, if it was creatively utilized. Similarly, the Christian can easily understand the Sikh view of the immanence of God if he cares to look through his doctrine of *logos prophorikos* in relation to the idea of God's omnipresence.

Thus, in their respective understanding of the pre-existence of Word with God, both Christian and Sikh meet each other; they agree with each other. When a Sikh reads out his scriptural text : "When there was no form, no sign and no division, then in its quintessence form, the Word dwelt in the Unlineal Lord,"⁴ a Christian will at once recall the text of St. John's Gospel : "Before the world was created, the Word already existed; he was with God, and he was the same as God. From the very beginning, the Word was with God."⁵ He will try to relate the Sikh concept to that of his own. He will find the Christian theological insight reflected in the Sikh faith. This would vivify his own faith for him; this would deepen and strengthen his own conviction. He will get doubly rooted in his faith. He will have the truth of his faith testified when he encounters a similar view in the Sikh system. Similarly, when a Sikh finds that a Christian explains the pre-existent relationship of Word with God in a way that is harmonious with his own belief, he will become further confirmed in his faith. In this way, the concept

of Word not only answers the common theological question on the mystery of God, but can also serve to strengthen the faith of each partner and to deepen his conviction. When both the traditions say that the Word is a reality which existed with God from the beginning, from eternity and yet is not an entity parallel to and independent of God, they might also be saying : "We speak the same thing, we mean the same thing, we meet each other in this point of view." The discovery of this similarity will mean for each, the Christian and the Sikh, the affirmation of the truth of his faith, as he will find support from the other's doctrine and tradition.

The concept of Word or Sabad can thus help to establish a very meaningful basis for dialogue between a Christian and a Sikh. A Christian with his theology of Word can easily understand what it means when a Sikh says that the world is created by Sabad.⁶ And a Sikh will not feel any difficulty in understanding the biblical text : "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."⁷ They speak the same language, the same truth. Creation is a religious mystery common to both the traditions. How close they are to each other in uncovering it is clearly indicated by the concept of Word each of them holds.

THE WORD AND THE REVELATION OF GOD

The Word represents truth and is not confined to cultural, geographical or traditional boundaries. It does not belong to Christianity or Sikhism as such; it belongs to God. The Word or truth is no one's monopoly. Religions are expressions of a certain comprehension (experience) of the same Reality. But Reality remains trans-temporal, above time and space. The Word being Divine Reality is not the exclusive possession of any one religious tradition. It is universal in its nature. The Word is the basic reflection of the Divine Reality, of Truth, and therefore of God. The same Word reveals God everywhere. In other words, God reveals Himself at every place through his Word. God does not belong exclusively to any creed, formula, system, tradition or culture. He is not bound to any such system. "God is no respecter of persons....,"⁸ as the Bible says, and so also is the view of the Guru Granth that God provides His providence to all beings.⁹ God reveals Himself in the Christian tradition; He also reveals Himself in the Sikh tradition. The Bible

says that "He left not Himself without witness"¹⁰ in all nations. A Christian must not think that God's revelation is confined only to the Christian tradition. In Christian tradition, Word is recognized as the basic means of God's revelation.¹¹ The Bible says that "the word of God is not bound,"¹² which clearly indicates that revelation of God is not bound to any single tradition. To understand the revelation of God in Sikh tradition, the concept of Word as propounded in it becomes very relevant. A Christian can easily understand how God reveals himself through the Word in Sikh tradition. Similarly, a Sikh can see from his own perspective that the revelation of God is not denied to other religions. In this regard, the Sikh view is in fact more open. A Sikh believes in the universality of God's revelation, and hence does not reject its possibility in other traditions. Both Christian and Sikh can develop an outlook which accepts the Word or Sabad as the one and the same Reality which reveals the same God in both the traditions, though they may differ in their cultural and traditional situation and creedal position. This outlook makes the dialogue real and genuine. It can also lead to inter-religious understanding.

The theology or doctrine of Word takes the partners in dialogue to the deepest level, to the very core of each other's faith. This will bring them to understanding each other's concepts of God, creation and revelation. They can proceed with this with full empathy. The concept of Word will provide an easy passage for one to travel into the other's religious realm. It will enable him to explore the other tradition at its deepest level. It discloses all secrets. Both Christian and Sikh faiths become open in the light of this understanding. This way both can have full opportunity to understand, and to relate themselves to, each other. The concept of Word or Sabad provides direction to their common search and common endeavour towards discovering truth, towards penetrating the mystery. Both Christian and Sikh can use their common perspective to build a wider understanding of Reality, of God. A sense of mutual cooperation and contribution will emerge from this pursuit of a common goal. The concept of Word lays the basis for a fruitful sharing of their mutual resources, their ideas and religious perspectives.

THE WORD AND THE ECONOMY OF SALVATION

According to Christianity and according to Sikhism, God's plan of salvation is for all mankind. It is not confined to people of any particular race, culture, territory or religious affiliation. There was a view—it may still be persisting in certain sectors—which did not recognize salvation outside Christianity. However, modern trends in Christian theology recognize salvation as universal. We notice also the outlook of the early Church theologians like Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Justin and others in this respect, which is more in consonance with the modern development in Christian thinking. "We can pick up its thread in Justin, with his well-known conception of the *logos spermatikos* at work already before the incarnation. All those who have lived according to the *logos* are Christians."¹³ Justin called them Christians before Christianity.¹⁴ This modern attitude is also clearly perceptible in the documents pertaining to the World Council of Churches' meeting held in Uppsala in 1968, and the second Vatican Council held from 1962-65. Those who promote this line of thought derive their inspiration from biblical sources themselves. For example, the following biblical texts are often cited in support of the universality of salvation in Christian thought :

Presence of God in other religions

God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein : who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness.¹⁵

Common humanity

Have we not all one father, hath not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers.¹⁶

Common humanity and common search for God in all

He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us : for in him we live, and move, and have our being . . .¹⁷

God is no respecter of persons—equality of all before God

God is no respecter of persons : but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.¹⁸

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.¹⁹

I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.²⁰

Universality of the economy of salvation

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb . . .²¹

And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.²²

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves : which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness . . .²³

For he that is not against us is on our part.²⁴

On the universality of salvation, Bade Griffiths says : "We thus reach the rather paradoxical conclusion, though it is theologically certain, that it is not by his outward profession of faith, whether he is Christian or Jew, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, agnostic or atheist, that man is saved, but by his response to the call of grace, which comes to every man secretly in every religious or irreligious state."²⁵ Likewise, verses can be quoted from the Sikh Scripture, the Guru Granth, proclaiming the universality of salvation/liberation and of God's grace :

Over all is Thine grace, O' Lord.²⁶

The Lord whose protecting hand is over all, is merciful to all beings.²⁷

Compassionate is the great true Guru, for whom all are alike.²⁸

The one Lord is the father of all. We are the children of the one Lord.²⁹

First God created light and then by His omnipotence made all the mortals. From the one light was welled up the entire universe. Then who is good and who is bad? O, my brethren, stray ye not in doubt.

Creation is in the Creator and the Creator is in the creation.

He is fully filling all places.³⁰

That God's plan of salvation is for every man is an assumption commonly shared by Christianity and Sikhism. Yet both the traditions differ on points of detail as to how this salvation is available to and worked out for every man. Jesus Christ is central to the Christian concept of salvation. This will not be recognizable by a Sikh. Nevertheless, there are certain mutually admissible realities

and points between the Christian and Sikh views of salvation. One such reality is the involvement of Word or Sabad in their salvation theologies.

A Christian, through a study and understanding of Sabad in the Sikh religion, will recognize certain familiar features in the Sikh view of liberation. He can see that Sabad is regarded as the essential means of liberation. It is conceived as a guide or teacher (Guru)—as an instrument of leading man into divine life; it removes darkness, ignorance, sin, and *haumai* (egocentricity), and releases man from the birth-and-death cycle. Reflecting over this, a Christian can acknowledge that in and through Sabad, the same *logos* or Word of God is active in the creative and redemptive work of salvation in Sikhism. This attitude is very well explained by Chethimattam in the following words : “The same *Logos* is active in other religions also so that each religion may play its role in its own way in the total economy of human salvation. Those who accept the presence of the Logos in Jesus of Nazareth cannot reject him and his Spirit when they are active elsewhere in human history. Besides, the acceptance by God of the work of the created and history-bound human nature of Jesus Christ was also at the same time acceptance in and with him of all that is genuinely human and authentic in human history. Hence, the genuine religious contribution of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Islam, of Confucius, Buddha, Mohammed and others can no longer be termed purely human, but must be taken as integral to the one economy of human salvation.”³¹ The same *logos* whom Christians identify with Christ as Word-incarnate can be discerned in the idea of Sabad which is significantly involved in the scheme of liberation in the Sikh tradition. Looking from the teaching of the universality of salvation and from the fact of the involvement of Word or Sabad in the total economy of salvation, Christian can understand and appreciate the Sikh view. Sabad may appear to him to be the same Word which is called “the Gospel of Salvation”³² by St Paul. He would see how Christians have concretized the same reality of Sabad in their faith when they speak of it in terms of Word-event in history—when they identify it with Christ in history. If a Christian thinks himself saved by the power of the Word of God, he

may be looked upon by the Sikh as one who has been saved by Sabad which is considered to be active everywhere. This is how a Sikh may be able to see the active presence of Sabad outside the Sikh faith. This is how both Christian and Sikh may understand each other in their view of the total economy of salvation and the active role of Word or Sabad in it. Word or Sabad is viewed upon as the basic creative and redemptive power of God in both the traditions. It is regarded as power of God which saves and which operates universally.

This basic recognition of the universality of salvation and of the centrality of Word leads both Christian and Sikh to a better mutual understanding and appreciation. It provides them with a meaningful point for starting a two-way dialogue. By opening themselves to each other they are likely to understand each other's faith better and also consider each other as included in the divine economy of the salvation of man. This will enlarge and deepen their understanding and knowledge of the meaning of their respective concepts of Word or Sabad and lead them to a better appreciation of the total meaning of reality and truth. This way, by understanding the other, one understands oneself better. In understanding oneself clearly one is better able to understand the other. The understanding of Word or Sabad can thus create a bridge of understanding, of relationship between the two traditions.

THE WORD—WITNESS AND RESPONSE TO MUTUAL PRESENCE

Both Christianity and Sikhism recognize Word as a power of God which is present and active in its universal meaning. This way both can witness and respond to the presence and activity of this reality in each other's faith. A dialogue in this direction may develop 'a theology of presence' which may help both the partners understand each other's faith and relate themselves to each other more meaningfully and fruitfully.

A Christian who recognizes the universality of *Word or logos*, and is also aware of a similar affirmation of the reality of Sabad in Sikhism can see the presence of the same reality which he calls Word or logos active in the Sikh faith. Similarly a Sikh can find and acknowledge the presence of Sabad in Christianity. The Sikh

idea of Sabad may not appear to be a strange concept to a Christian, and vice versa, *logos* may not seem to be a reality alien to a Sikh. Most of the time and at most levels they speak of Word in the same language. One tradition may not appear to the other to be 'another religion' but a part of its own faith, a reflection of its own image. In the terminology of Raymond Panikkar, each will see the other as a 'vestibule' of its own faith.

In a dialogue when a Sikh describes or speaks about the concept of Sabad of his own tradition, a Christian may be hearing his own interpretation of *logos*. There he can see *logos* at work in Sikh tradition. The *logos* may appear to be speaking through the Sikh partner, through the Sikh scripture. In hearing the *bāṇī* or the Śabad he hears the voice of *logos*. A Sikh who believes in God and also in the theology of Sabad is already an '*Imago Dei*', and he has thus every right to be listened to by a Christian. He is a fellow believer, a fellow pilgrim to the same sacred destiny. Theologically speaking, a Christian must be able to listen to what God communicates through Sabad or Word revealed to the partner. He must listen to what God wants to say through this "*Imago-Dei*". While listening he must 'put within brackets' his own Christian conviction, preferences, prejudices and value-judgements. It demands employment of 'epoche', a 'phenomenological epoche'.³³ It demands empathy to understand the other partner. This hearing and listening should not be a one-way traffic; otherwise, any attempt at dialogue would degenerate into a monologue or a unilateral talk. On the other hand, a Sikh can see, when he hears a proclamation of the Word of God from a Christian, that it is the *bāṇī* or Sabad being proclaimed or spoken about. He may see how Sabad has been absorbed, appropriated or assimilated into Christian faith, that the Christian may appear to be a sharer, a participant of the same reality of Sikhism.

This was attempted once in one of the Christian-Sikh dialogues held in Patiala on the theme : 'Bāṇī comes to Man'.³⁴ Both the partners tried to see and understand the communicating aspect of the Word of God to man. This was the occasion to realize and understand the relationship of the 'Word of God' or 'bāṇī' with man in his human situation. In this dialogue, it was felt and acknowledged that Word or *bāṇī* speaks to man at various levels of

meaning. In this respect its role is seen as a source of strength or power (moral force), a guiding principle, educator and inspirer. In this encounter, relating the meaning and significance of *bāṇī* to the human situation of life, both Christian and Sikh partners felt to be facing and sharing common human situations, common human problems. And this awareness led them, as believers in God, to listen to what God had to say to them, to communicate to them, to listen to the voice and Word or *bāṇī* of God given in their scriptures. It was felt that *bāṇī* or Word has the same message to give in their common situations and common problems. In listening to the *bāṇī* of the Sikh scripture, Christians felt that a message had reached them cutting across the religious barriers. Similarly, in hearing the Word of God from the Christian scriptures Sikhs acknowledged to have had a similar experience. The mutual response to the presence and respective witness of Word or *bāṇī* or Sabad could not but be a source of deepening Christian-Sikh understanding.

This awareness of mutual presence of Word or Sabad draws both Christianity and Sikhism into the 'vestibule' of each other. In exposing their respective understanding, their respective faith to the other through the idea of Word or Sabad, both the partners bear witness to the presence of Word or Sabad in each other's faith. This awareness leads to a mutual response to each other's faith, a response to the communication that takes place between the faiths, a response to the common situation of which they become aware in the presence of each other.

The vision or awareness of this universal presence of Word transcends their creedal and cultural barriers. The presence-theology creates a new situation, a situation of real dialogue which might have been missing in the past. It creates a new ground for understanding and relationship between the two faiths. It enables each partner to look beyond himself, to look beyond the boundaries and barriers of his faith, to look outside the confines and tenets of his religion. It widens the vision of a Christian to look beyond his limited circle, beyond Christian frontiers, to see the presence of his Word, his Christ beyond the Christian confines, to see the larger Christ in the universal and cosmic setting. Consequently, he is enabled to broaden the meaning of his faith, his concepts, his Word,

his Christ, in whom he could include his Sikh partner not as 'other' but as a fellow participant and sharer in the same heritage, in the same meaning and experience. A feeling of *ananyatva*, unotherness or non-alterity, begins to emerge. One realizes one's essential relatedness to the other. In this larger perspective, one feels the freedom to enter into a fraternal relationship with the other. There are, nevertheless, practical difficulties involved. Many a Christian still holds to a narrow and limited image of Christ. He has not been able to widen the meaning of Christ and has not yet perceived Christ in His full meaning. With this rather narrow and parochial outlook on Christ, he has proportionately narrowed down the frontiers of understanding of the Christian faith and also restricted the meaning of salvation.³⁵

The need is to relate salvation, to relate the activity of God to a larger and cosmic Christ. The theology of Word serves to widen the meaning of Christ, of Christian faith. Then dialogue is made possible—and fruitful. The perspective becomes still wider if the theology of Word is studied along with the theology of Sabad. Seeing the presence and significant role of Sabad in Sikh faith, a Christian may bear witness and respond to Christ and his active engagement in the work of salvation. Likewise, the recognition of the universal presence of Sabad enables a Sikh to look across the boundaries of his faith, to see the Guru present and active beyond, Sikhism, beyond its historical and physical particularity. The theology of Sabad makes him see Nanak as the Nanak of faith. This puts the Guru into wider and cosmic meaning of faith. Sabad in Sikh theology signifies real Guru who is more of a cosmic and universal reality than a historical entity. A Sikh finds Sabad-Guru present everywhere. In a dialogue with a Christian, this awareness of its presence in Christianity in its own way calls a Sikh to respond to it. He may see the presence of his Guru in Christianity which he hardly realized or thought of otherwise. The comparative study of Word and Sabad and the theology of presence will broaden his perspective of Guru and of his faith. When Christian and Sikh learn to discover the presence of Word or Sabad in each other's faith, they would begin to respond to the inner urge, to the inner longing for understanding, for togetherness.

THE WORD — A THEOLOGY OF INTER-RELATEDNESS

The understanding and knowledge of the Word or Sabad acquired through a comparative study of Christianity and Sikhism and the awareness of its significance in the process will be important and meaningful for both Christian and Sikh. As they become aware of their common situation in which they discover each other as co-pilgrims marching to the same goal, they will realize the need for cooperation with each other. Theologically speaking, they would discover their common situation before God and before man. In relating oneself to God one discovers a deep relationship with the other, with the fellow believer. The relationship with God will mean little without its expression in human relationship. This realization leads both Christian and Sikh to accept each other as brothers and as children of God, as sharers in the common humanity.

The knowledge and understanding of Word or Sabad will tend to cut across their sense of isolation. They will mutually become aware of the presence of the other, because the same Word or Sabad is also present in the other. The idea of Word or Sabad breaks the boundaries, walls, circumferences that separate them. So long as Christians and Sikhs do not know each other they remain separate, isolated and unrelated communities. The concept of Word or Sabad provides a key, an opening to know each other. A judicious understanding of this term would help to lift up the veil enabling both Christian and Sikh to see related meanings in their respective traditions.

Knowledge of each other's understanding of Word and a mutual sense of appreciation lead to a creative relationship and to a deepening sense of respect and love for each other. This stimulates a new outlook, a need for reinterpretation of one's faith in light of the knowledge and understanding of the other's beliefs, in light of the new meaning of which one was not aware before. In his new situation, both will discover how they need each other, how they can relate themselves to each other. This creative need for each other binds them into a relationship. This relationship could grow to other levels of secularity as well as of spirituality.

THE WORD—COMMITMENT AND OPENNESS

Commitment to one's own faith and openness to that of the

other are necessary conditions without which a genuine dialogue is impossible.³⁶ The concept of Word or Sabad involves points which help maintaining these pre-suppositions in the Christian-Sikh context. Both Christianity and Sikhism meet in Word or Sabad and yet they uphold the tenets of their own faith, they remain faithful and loyal to their beliefs and convictions. This concept is so familiar to each other that acknowledging its reality and listening to any talk and discussion on it do not seem to strain one's loyalty to one's faith. In recognizing and acknowledging the meaning of Word expressed in the other tradition, one feels as if one is moving within one's own doctrinal premises, and enjoys the dialogue. It is in this concept that both meet, and yet neither of them deviates from his own theological position. Recognizing the meaning of Word in the other tradition does not amount to a conversion to the view of the other, for most often it reveals a meaning that conforms to that of one's own. Striking similarities do not suggest any amalgamation or syncretism of the two faiths, nor the abrogation of their individual entities. Again, it does not mean that both the concepts are synonymous. In spite of all the similarities of views and likeness in meaning, both the faiths are autonomous systems. The role of the concept of Word is to facilitate a close and intimate mutual understanding of each other's faith. The concept of Word or Sabad helps in establishing a Christian-Sikh dialogue. And not only on this theme, but also on other doctrines such as salvation, creation, God, Guru and Christ, for it is involved in one way or another in these concepts. Christianity and Sikhism are two religions. They have their own way of understanding the same reality called Word or *logos*, Sabad or *bāṇī*. Dialogue brings this understanding within the reach of each other. In achieving this understanding, they remain sincere to their faith and commitment.

Sincerity to one's commitment does not mean rigidity, lack of freedom of movement, impossibility to grow and develop in one's own understanding and perception. It, on the contrary, admits freedom to be open to the other view, freedom to grow and develop into broader dimensions of meaning and understanding. This is especially possible in respect of dialogue on Word. The concept of Word or Sabad contains elements of wider recognition.

Starting a genuine dialogue based on concepts such as Christ, incarnation resurrection, and eschatology may prove very difficult, for they involve unique and exclusive features. Consequently, the Sikh may find it difficult to enter into any deep level of dialogue and relationship with the Christian via these themes. Similarly, birth-death cycle theory, peculiar to the Sikh, will preclude a free dialogue. These doctrines are less likely to make for a mutual attitude of openness. It is quite possible that acknowledging these exclusive ideas may be considered as an impingement on one's own commitment. With such dwindling confidence, no real and genuine dialogue can ensue.

On the contrary, the concept of Word or Sabad offers wider possibilities of openness to the partners. Most of the dimensions of this concept in both the traditions serve as easy passage for two-way communication. The concept of Word or Sabad is not only an open door in itself, it also opens new avenues to other areas of thought. It provides clues to understanding other doctrines such as that of God and creation in the theologies of both religions.

THE WORD—MEETING IN PARTICULARITIES

The Word is a meeting point between Christianity and Sikhism. It is on this point they meet in the universal dimension as well as in the particular dimensions of their religions. It is easier to meet on the points of similarities and universalities than on points of differences and particularities. Theology of dialogue offers possibilities of meeting on points of differences and particularities as well. Each religion has its exclusive claims, peculiar features, its own theology and ethos which differentiate and distinguish it from other religious traditions. This is true of Christianity and Sikhism also. They differ and disagree with each other at various levels of conception and statement. They have different origin and background, and they stand as two different entities independent of and distinct from each other. Yet they meet in fraternal relationship. It is not a relationship which means agreements in all respects. It is a relationship which involves also disagreement, differences, exclusive claims and particularities.

According to Santosh Chandra Sengupta : "Each religion has its distinctive character in respect of belief part and conduct part.

Now a proper understanding of the religions is possible if the distinctive characters are studied in the light of areas of agreement as indicated. Such a study reveals that the distinctive characteristics are in the nature of differences in emphasis. Now it is in the attitude that the distinctive emphases of different religions are complementary to one another, that the religions should be approached. One belonging to one religious faith can draw on what another faith can draw on what another faith can offer to him."³⁷ This would well apply to Christianity and Sikhism. The points of differences between them reveal the new dimension of meaning, the other aspect of the same reality. Now, to understand the other dimension or the 'other point of view', it requires 'epoche' and 'empathy'. If the partners allow their personal conviction or standpoint to come in the way of understanding, and try to test the other point of view from that of their own, they will soon miss the core of meaning and the dialogue shall break down. Judgement should not be passed on the unique, distinctive and different meanings of the reality in the other faiths; they should be studied and understood as they are understood by them.

A sharp difference between Christianity and Sikhism appears when Christians say that the Word became flesh and identify it with the person of Jesus Christ. This incarnatory aspect of Word is unacceptable to the Sikh. The Sikh will totally disagree with this point of view of the Christian. To him it will appear new and different meaning. But if he tries to understand it from the point of view of the Christian, if he tries to see it as a Christian sees it with a full sense of empathy and epoche, he will be able to see the other dimension of meaning of Sabad revealed and expressed in the Christian tradition. He will come to know the other dimension of understanding the same reality of which he was not aware before and with which he may not agree.

With a similar approach they can grasp to some extent other particularities of each other's religion. The concept of Word or Sabad will stand out as a starting point. The Word is a meeting-point of Christian and Sikh particularities. For example, the Christian view that salvation is achieved only through Christ, may not be acceptable to a Sikh. But the concept of Word will help him

understand the meaning of Christ and his involvement in salvation. This particular doctrine of Christianity, this singular claim and assertion of the Christian may not be acceptable, but it can be understood as a new perspective of salvation. Likewise, when a Sikh says that '*bina-gur Mukti nāhī* (no liberation is possible without Guru), a Christian would not consider this assertion a rejection of the Christian view of salvation if he tries to understand its meaning in terms of the theology of Word or Sabad. In the assertion 'salvation through Guru' he may be able to see another dimension of 'salvation in Christ' and thereby he may be able to broaden his understanding and perspective of salvation.

It may be relevant here to refer to a Christian-Sikh dialogue which took place in Chandigarh on January 10, 1976. At the dialogue, two passages were chosen, one each from the Bible and the Guru Granth. The central concentration of each passage was on 'the characteristics of a saintly man'. This discussion revealed many new points from both perspectives. Besides striking similarities, there were individual aspects which were new to each other; yet they were appreciated and understood by the partners from both sides as realities present distinctively in their faiths. The dialogue was, in a sense, a reflection of Christian-Sikh meeting in particularities.

As Professor Donald G. Dawe puts it: "The similarities and differences between the religions that are the heart of dialogue reflect the struggle of the human psyche in its search for meaning and wholeness against the forces that threaten it. It is this human reference point of religion that can be shared in dialogue."³⁸ Thus the points of differences between Christianity and Sikhism add to each other's knowledge of truth, of reality, and of the total meaning of that reality. Meeting in particularities and appreciating the exclusive character of the other faith does not amount to confessing a self-deficiency but it expresses the creative need for the other; it expresses the openness of one partner to the other.

The concept of Word or Sabad is not only a meeting-point between Christianity and Sikhism in similarities and universalities, but also in differences and particularities of both the religions in dialogue.

NOTES

1. Raymond Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1964), p. 6.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
3. In October 1972, a discussion which was meant to be a dialogue between Christians and Sikhs, was held at the Christian Institute of Sikh Studies, Batala. The theme was: "Theology: Christian and Sikh". On this occasion papers were read from both sides on their respective doctrine of God. Each side explained its perspective. No discussion developed on points of similarities. No effort was made to exchange views and to understand the other point of view. It was rather a monologue as it consisted on one party speaking while the other was listening.
The seminar on 'Guruship' also could not assume the nature of a real dialogue; it mostly remained on the level of a monologue. For this see a report on "The Nature of Guruship" *Bulletin of the Christian Institute of Sikh Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Batala : C.I.S.S., January, 1975), p. 11.
4. *rupu na rekhiā jati na hoti*
tau akulini rahtau sabadu susāru...
Gurū Granth, Siddh Goshṭi, I, 945
5. *The New Testament in Today's English Version* (The American Bible Society Translation.) Jh. 1:2. See also another translation in *The New English Bible*, where the same text reads: "When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was. The Word, then, was with God at the beginning."
The A.V. Bible reads as follows, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."
6. See, *kūtā pasāu eko kavāu...* Gurū Granth, Jap, 1, 3.
(With one Word Thou didst effect the world's expansion.)
ek kavāvai te sabhi hoā... Gurū Granth, Mārū, V, 1003.
(They have all been made from the One Word).
utpati parlau sabade hovai ... Gurū Granth, Mārū, III, 117
(the creation and deluge occur by the Lord's Word).
7. Ps. 33 : 6. For the same meaning, see also, Jn. 1:3, and II Pt.3:5
8. Acts. 10:34., see also "There is no respect of persons with God" (Rom, 2:11). "God accepteth no man's person" (Gal.2:6). "Neither is there respect of persons with him" (Eph, 6:9).
9. See, *phakar jāti phakar nāu sabnā jiā kā ikā chāu...* Gurū Granth, Siri, I, 83 (Preposterous is caste and vain is the renown. The Lord alone gives shades to all the beings.)
10. Acts, 14:16, this text indicates that God has been in constant association with all the nations of the world. He has been talking to and manifesting Himself upon the man of other traditions also.

11. "...for the Lord revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of Lord."
I Sam. 3:21.
"It is by the Word and Word alone, that the father reveals Himself : 'He is ineffable' but the Word declares Him to us. Christ who reveals God is himself Word-incarnate." J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine* (London : Adam and Charles Black, 1st Pub. 1958, 3rd Ed., 1965), pp. 106-07.
12. II Tim, 2:9.
13. George Khodr, "Christianity in a Pluralistic World—The Economy of the Holy Spirit"—in *Living Faiths and the Ecumenical Movement* ed., S.J. Samarth (Geneva : World Council of Churches, 1971), p. 133.
14. See Justin's I *Apology* 32, 8 and II *Apology* 8, 1; 10, 2; 13, 3.
See for Justin's view in this respect, J.N.D. Kelly *Early Christian Doctrine* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 3rd ed., 1965), pp. 96, 146
F.J. Foakes Jackson, *History of the Christian Church* (London : George Allen and Unwin, reprint 1957), p. 159
Frank N. Magill, *Masterpieces of Catholic Literature* (London: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 21
15. Acts, 14: 15-17
16. Mal, 2:10
17. Acts. 17: 25-28
18. Acts. 10: 34-35, See also Rom, 2:11; Gal, 2:6; Eph, 6:9; I Pt, 1:17
19. Matt. 7:21
20. Rom. 10:20, See also Is. 65:1
21. Rev. 7:9
22. Lk. 13:29-30, See also Matt. 19:30. 20:6; Mk. 10:3
23. Rom 2: 14-15
24. Mk. 9:40
25. Bede Griffiths, *Christ in India: Essays towards a Hindu-Christian Dialogue* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1966). pp. 196-197.
26. *Sabhnā upari nadari prabhu terī...*
Gurū Granth, Mājh, III, 119
27. *jia jañt diāl purkhu sabh ūpari jākā hāthu...*
Gurū Granth, Gauri, V, 300
28. *satiguru purkhu diālu hai jis no samatu sabhu koi...*
Gurū Granth, Gauri, IV, 300
29. *eku pitā ekas ke ham bārik...*
Gurū Granth, Sorathi, V, 611
30. *avali alāh nūru upāiā kudarati ke sabh bande
ek nūr te sabhu jagu upajiā kaun bhale ko mande
bhulhu bhāi logā bharmi, na
khāliku khalak khalak mahi khāliku pūri rahio sarb tñnāi...*
Guru Granth, Kabir., 1349
31. "Man's Dialogical Nature and the Dialogue of Religions" J.B. Chethimattam, in *Journal of Dharma*, Vol. 1, No. 1 and 2 (Bangalore:

Centre for the Study of World Religions, Dharmaram College, July 1975), p. 28

32. See Eph: 1:13

33. Though many theologians and scholars of dialogue emphasise the use of the principle 'epoche' for a fruitful dialogue, Panikkar does not agree with this as is evident from his article "The Internal dialogue—The Insufficiency of the So-called Phenomenological 'Epoche' in the Religious Encounter," in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XV, No. 3 (Bangalore: Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, September 1968), p. 55

34. This dialogue between Christian and Sikh on the theme "The *bānī* (Word of God) comes to Man," was organized by the Secretary of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India Commission on Inter-Religious Dialogue, on March 21, 1976, at Patiala, Punjab (India).

35. This is how it was expressed by a Hindu named Sivendra Prakash in his letter to Murray Rogers, which was published under the title "Hindu-Christian Dialogue Postponed" in *Dialogue Between Men of Living Faiths* (Geneva : World Council of Churches, 1971), pp. 27, 28. He says, "I must be brave enough to tell you all my thought. I am afraid you have minimized your Christ by insisting on the unique claims of Jesus. This absolutization of the condition of his manifestation in human history added to a lack of real interiority in the lives of most Christians, is the greatest stumbling block to us. When you have discovered the inner Christ in the light of the Spirit within, then we shall gladly come forward to share with you our own experience of the interiority of God."

Expressing a similar view K.L. Seshagiri Rao says, "I was eager to know Jesus Christ as he is and not as he has been presented or misrepresented. Well, I am yet in the process of my learning and understanding. But history had taught me one thing, viz. that the different churches came into existence in Europe and America for good historical reasons. They stood for certain definite principles. But how these divisions were useful in the understanding of Jesus Christ in the Indian context was the question that troubled me. I thought that these conflicts of traditions and narrow ideologies hindered the vision of Christ and focussed attention on extraneous factors. He further says, It is desirable that interpretation of Jesus Christ and His activities should be big enough as to include Him in every religion wherever truth, goodness and love operate. A Hindu seeks the universal and living Christ." K.L. Seshagiri Rao, *Mahatma Gandhi and C.F. Andrews: A Study in Hindu-Christian Dialogue* (Patiala: Punjabi University, 1969), pp. 78 and 91.

36. "That genuine dialogue can be carried on only in an atmosphere of freedom—freedom to be committed to one's own faith and to be open to the convictions of the others." S.J. Samartha, "Introduction" *Dialogue Between Men of Living Faiths* (Geneva : World Council of Churches, 1971) p.9.

"True dialogue can take place only in an atmosphere of sincerity with oneself and with others." J.B. Chethimattam, "Man's Dialogical Nature and the Dialogue of Religions," in *Journal of Dharma*, Vol. 1, No. 1 and 2 (Bangalore: Centre for the Study of World Religions, Dharmaram College, July 1975), p. 16.

37. Santosh Chandra Sengupta, "On the Understanding of Other Religions," in *Dialogue Between Men of Living Faiths*, ed, S.J. Samarth (Geneva : World Council of Churches, 1971), p. 91.
38. "The Universal and the Particular in the Dialogue of Religions" talk given at the Christian Institute of Sikh Studies. Batala, on November 25, 1974. This was later on published under the title "The Basis of Dialogue", Donald G. Dawe in *Bulletin of the Christian Institute of Sikh Studies* Vol. 4, No. 2 (Batala: C.I.S.S., July 1975), p. 5.